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AJANTA FRESCOES





GENERAL VIEW OF THE CAVES

(From Fergusson's *Illustrations of the Rock Cut Temples of India*)

AJANTA FRESCOES

BY

LADY HERRINGHAM

WITH INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS BY
VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE
INDIAN SOCIETY



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AJANTA FRESCOES

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PREFACE

IN this volume Lady Herringham's copies of some of the paintings in the caves of Ajantā, situated on the northern border of Hyderabad, Deccan, are reproduced on behalf of the India Society, whose property they are. The pictures, which are in full scale, are at present exhibited at the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. They were presented to the Society in 1912, and were first shown at the Festival of Empire Exhibition held at the Crystal Palace in that year. For that occasion Lady Herringham compiled the account which now appears below her name, and to which is added a note by Miss Larcher, who worked with her.

The story of the successive attempts to bring these famous pictures within reach of the public, their place in the art of the East and of the world generally, and various other points of interest connected with painted cave-temples of India, are discussed below in a series of short essays by members of the Society.

The reproductions in colour are the work of Mr. Emery Walker and the monochromes of the Oxford University Press. The methods of reproduction to be applied to each subject have been chosen by Mr. W. Rothenstein and Prof. W. R. Lethaby. Mr. F. W. Thomas and Mr. T. W. Rolleston have arranged the Table of Plates and corrected the proofs of the letterpress, and Mr. L. Binyon the proofs of the plates. Mr. A. H. Fox-Strangways has acted as general editor.

While thanking those who have given time and trouble to this work, the Committee think it right to say that such a publication would have been impossible without very generous donations. The names of the donors are: His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, Sir Wilmot and Lady Herringham, Dr. Victor de Goloubew, Mrs. Sophie Cunliffe Jay, and Mr. C. L. Rutherston. No extensive appeal has been made, since certain friends and relatives of Lady Herringham have taken upon themselves the greater portion of the expenses, in order that the undertaking might be worthily executed as a memorial of her work for India. The Committee have also to acknowledge the support of the Governments of India and Ceylon, which have been good enough to take a large number of copies.

His Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad has been pleased to accept the dedication, offered in token of a sincere appreciation of the kindly protection and substantial aid which Lady Herringham's expedition received from his illustrious predecessor.

The volume is presented to members of the Society as a publication for the years 1914, 1915.

By order of the Committee of the India Society,

JOHN DE LA VALETTE,
Honorary Secretary.

108 LEXHAM GARDENS,
LONDON, W.,

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* Original copy preserved in the Indian Museum, South Kensington.

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* Original copy preserved in the Indian Museum, South Kensington.

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	(39) TWO WOMEN, ANIMALS, AND BIRDS IN A PALACE GARDEN.	Cave XVII. Left wall of hall, immediately below XXXVI (41), of which it seems to form a part.	Carbon tracing.	Miss Dorothy Larcher.
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	(48) KING, QUEEN, AND BEGGAR GROUP. (From the <i>Viśvantara-jātaka</i> : cf. Nos. VII, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI, XXXV (39)?, XXXVI (41), XXXVIII (46).)	Cave XVII. Left of hall, between cell doors; below No. XXIII to left.	Carbon tracing.	Miss Dorothy Larcher.
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XLII.	(56) PHOTOGRAPH OF REPLICA of No. XXII taken about the year 1890 for the Jeypore Museum.	Cave XVII. See No. XXII	Photograph kindly supplied by Lt.-Col. T. H. Hendley, C.I.E.
	(57) DITTO of No. XVII, taken for the same.	Cave XVII. See No. XVII	Photograph kindly supplied by Lt.-Col. T. H. Hendley, C.I.E.

* Original copy preserved in the Indian Museum, South Kensington.

THE *JĀTAKAS* REFERRED TO IN THE TABLE OF PLATES

THE following are the *jātakas*, or Birth-Stories of the Buddha, referred to in the Table of Plates.¹

MĀTRIPOSHAKA-JĀTAKA, No. 455 (see plates XVIII–XXI).

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisattva was born as an elephant in the Himālaya region, a magnificent white beast : but his mother was blind, and the other elephants did not give her the sweet food he sent ; so he took her away to Mount Chanḍoraṇa, and there he cherished her. One day he saved a forester, who for seven days had lost his way, and carried him out of the forest on his back. The man, however, marked the trees and hills, and then made his way to Benares. At that time the King's State Elephant had just died, and there was a proclamation for another fit for the King's riding. The forester betrayed the friendly elephant, and showed the King's hunters the way. The Bodhisattva, in spite of his great strength, refused to destroy them, lest his virtue should be marred ; so he was caught in the lotus-lake and taken to the King's stable, decked with festoons and garlands. The King took all manner of fine food and gave it him ; but not a bit would he eat : ' Without my mother I will eat nothing,' he said. When the King heard the story, he gave him freedom ; and the elephant went back to the hills and to his mother, and, drawing water from a limpid pool, sprinkled it over her, and at last she knew him and blessed the King's goodness, and the King did continual honour to the Bodhisattva, and made a stone image of him.

There the inhabitants of all India, year by year, gathered to perform what was called the Elephant Festival.

VIŚVANTARA-JĀTAKA, No. 547 (see plates VII, XXIII, XXIV, XXVI, XXXV (39)?, XXXVI (41), XXXVII (42), XXXVIII (46), XXXIX (48)).

To King Śibi was born a son named Saṇjaya, whose Queen Phusatī had a son Viśvantara. Before his birth the fortune-tellers said that he would be devoted to alms-giving, never satisfied with giving. As soon as he was born, he held out his hand to his mother and said, ' Mother, I wish to make some gift, is there anything?' ; and she gave him a purse of money. When he was eight years old, he wished to give away something of his own – his heart, his flesh, or his eyes. As he grew up, he gave great alms, at last even his magical elephant with its costly jewelled trappings, which could bring rain to the drought-stricken kingdom of Kāliṅga. The people were so angry with Viśvantara for giving their elephant away, that to save his life his father banished him ; his wife Madrī and children accompanied him. He gave everything away, even surrendering to four Brahmins who had not shared in the other gifts the horses of the chariot in which he was driving

away with his wife and children, boy and girl : so they had to go on foot. To prove his virtue, the gods allowed his children to be taken by a Brahmin Jūjaka, who was cruel to them, and bound and beat them. At night, as they travelled, he left the children lying on the ground, while he climbed into a tree for fear of the wild beasts. But the gods pitied the children, and in the guise of their father and mother came every night and tended and fed them, but in the morning put them in their bonds again. In the end they reached their grandfather's court, where they were recognized. Then the great God Śakra, feeling sure that the Great Being would give away even his own wife, decided himself to ask for her, so as to enable him to attain the supreme height of perfection, and, having thus made it impossible that she should be given to any one else, then to give her back. At last Viśvantara and Madrī are summoned by Saṇjaya and Phusatī from their hermitage life and restored to their children and royal honours.

Cf. *The Gūṭakamālā* . . . by Ārya Śūra translated . . . by J. S. Speyer. Oxford, 1895, pp. 71–93.

SHAḌDANTA-JĀTAKA, No. 514 (see plate XXVII).

Once the Bodhisattva came to life as the son of the chief elephant of a great herd of 8,000 in the Himālaya. They dwelt near Lake Shaḍdanta in a golden cave, amid pools of white lilies, blue, white and red lotuses, and thickets of red paddy gourds and of many other plants. The elephant was 82 cubits high and 120 cubits long, and had a trunk like a silver rope. He had two queens, and accidentally he offended one of them. She prayed that she might be reborn as a beautiful maiden and become the chief wife of the King of Benares : ' Then I shall be dear and charming in his eyes, and in the position to do what I please. So I will speak to the King and send a hunter with a poisoned arrow to wound and slay the elephant, and thus I may be able to have brought to me a pair of his tusks which emit six-coloured rays.' Thenceforth she took no food ; and, pining away, she died.

She was reborn, and became the Queen of Benares, and carried out her wicked intention. When the hunter whom she sent, travelling seven years, had shot the royal elephant with the poisoned arrow, he was unable to cut off the tusks, although the elephant lay down and let him climb up his trunk ; so the elephant with his trunk pulled them out and gave them to the hunter, not as having no value, but as less than the ' tusks of omniscience, . . . and may this meritorious act be to me the cause of attaining omniscience'. When the tusks were brought to the Queen, she laid them in her lap on her jewelled fan, and then, at the remembrance of one who in her former existence had been her dear lord, she was filled with so great a sorrow that she could not endure it, but her heart then and there was broken, and that very day she died. The six-rayed, or six-coloured, tusks are generally taken to mean six tusks.

¹ See *The Jātaka* . . . translated from the Pāli by various hands under the editorship of Professor E. B. Cowell, Cambridge, 1895–1913. The proper names are for the sake of consistency, and also in view of the place and date of the caves, given in their Sanskrit forms.

RURU-JĀTAKA, No. 482 (see plate VIII).

A merchant's son, brought up to pleasure by his rich parents, wasted his possessions and was dunned by his creditors; pretending that he'd show them buried treasure, he then threw himself into the Ganges to drown, but, being frightened, he cried out pitifully. The Great Being had been born as a golden deer. He had forsaken the herd and was dwelling alone. He saved the drowning man, and then extracted a promise that he should not be betrayed. But when Queen Kshemā dreamed of a golden deer who preached to her, and inquiry was made, the man broke the promise, and guided the King to the deer's haunts. The King, enchanted by his honeyed voice, let his bow fall, and stood still in reverence; and he took the Great Being to Benares and appeased the Queen's desire by his discourse, and, as a boon, the King proclaimed 'I give protection to all creatures'. From that time onwards no one durst so much as raise a hand against beast or bird.

ŚIBI-RĀJA-JĀTAKA, No. 499 (see plates IV, XVI, XXXIX (47)).

Prince Śibi, the son of the King of Arishṭapura, was the Great Being. He gave much in alms; but one day he desired to give something that was truly himself—his heart, his flesh, or his eyes—or to work as a slave. Śakra, the god, resolved to try him, and he came as a blind beggar and asked for first one eye, then the other; and the prince gave them, suffering great agony, and surrounded by his weeping and wailing ministers and women. Having received both eyes, Śakra returned to the abode of the gods. The end of the story is mystic: for Śakra came again and gave the blind King the eyes of Truth, absolute and perfect, which were 'neither natural nor divine'. Yet we are left thinking that the King received both natural sight and spiritual.

Cf. *The Gātakamālī*, &c., pp 8-19.

MAHĀHARSA-JĀTAKA, No. 534 (cf. Nos. 502, 503)
(see plates XXV, XXXIII, XLI (54)).

Once upon a time there reigned in Benares a King called the Father of Many Sons, and his Queen's name was Kshemā. At that time the Great Being was a golden goose, the chief of ninety thousand geese. The Queen dreamed that a golden goose preached to her; and, waking, she desired to find him. Persuaded by her and advised by his hunter, the King made his lakes a great sanctuary, and proclaimed this afar. But, when the golden geese came, the hunter snared the Great Being and his captain, Sumukha, and brought them to the King, by the Great Being's free will, for the hunter would have set him free, recognizing his virtue. The King was delighted and did them honour, feeding them with honey and fried grain; and, holding out his hands in supplication, he prayed them to speak of the Law. . . . Thus did the Great Being discourse to the King the livelong night, and the Queen's craving was appeased.

THE QUESTIONS TO ŚĀRIPUTRA (see Plate XXII).

'When the Master stood at the foot of the staircase [by which he descended from heaven after preaching to the thirty-three Gods], first Elder Śāriputra gave him greeting, afterwards the rest of the company.

Amidst this assembly, the Master thought, "Moggallāna has been shown to possess supernatural power, Upāli as one versed in the sacred law, but the quality of high wisdom possessed by Śāriputra has not been shown. Save and except me, no other possesses wisdom so full and complete as his; I will make known the quality of his wisdom." [This he does by putting successively more difficult questions, which Śāriputra answers.]—JĀTAKA, No. 483, Introduction.



NOTE ON PREVIOUS COPYINGS OF THE FRESCOES

By THE EDITOR

THE Caves of Ajantā first became known to Europeans in 1819. Descriptions of them appeared in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1829, pp. 362–370, and the *Bombay Courier* in 1839. Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Fergusson laid before the Royal Asiatic Society in 1843 his paper on the Rock-cut Temples of India, a dozen pages of which are devoted to Ajantā. In the next year that Society addressed the Directors of the East India Company with a plea for the preservation of the caves and the execution of copies of the frescoes; and, as a result of their Minute of May 29, Major (then Captain) Robert Gill of the Madras Army was engaged to make facsimile copies of all the pictures and was allowed adequate assistance.

Major Gill worked with devotion at Ajantā until the Mutiny, and sent from time to time about thirty copies, many of them of very large size, to London, where they were kept in the Museum of the East India Company in Leadenhall Street. These were painted in oil and were, except for the vehicle, facsimiles. The work proceeded through twelve years under difficulties and disappointments, and it constitutes a remarkable feat of endurance. In 1852 a large piece of painting was stolen, and repeated requests for a guard resulted in a *naik* and eight *sipāhīs* being sent in Sept. 1857. Next year fever and dysentery appeared in the camp, and Major Gill reported himself as having been far from well during the last fifteen months.

About 1862 Gill's stereoscopic photographs of the *Rock Temples of Ajanta and Ellora* were published, and he was still sending home paintings and drawings in 1863, in which year also he drew up a memorandum of his work at the caves (Madras Government, Public Department, Nov. 27). His *One Hundred Stereoscopic Illustrations of Architecture and Natural History* appeared in 1864. The paintings, except the five last executed, were sent to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham for exhibition, and they all perished there by fire in December 1866. No photographs of them had been taken.

In 1868 Major Gill disposed of his negatives and two books of plans, sketches, and notes to Government for the sum of £200. The photographs were taken by the light of a magnesium lamp, and for these *A list of the photographic negatives of Indian antiquities . . . in the possession of the India Office*, 1900, may be consulted. Not long after the fire Gill went again to Ajantā to report on the state of the caves with a view to further copies; and his letter of June 21, 1868, after enumerating several instances where the painting had disappeared in the course of the last ten years, closes somewhat sadly: 'Reduced as the paintings now are and in their present condition I should think ordinary tracings of what could be made out and only one or two small pieces finished up, merely to show the style of colouring and the light and shade of the originals, would be all that is needed.'

The five paintings which escaped the fire of 1866 found their way to South Kensington, where they were in 1879,

when Dr. Burgess published his *Notes on the Bauddha Rock Temples*. On pages 10–13 he identifies four of them as belonging to *Cave I*, and the fifth he mentions on p. 64, and in a recent letter to the Librarian of the India Office, as being a very long ceiling from the verandah of *Cave XVII*. The latter is now lost; it may have been burnt in 1885.

The four others are still there, and, though they bear no identifying marks, they are distinguished from the rest of Griffiths's collection both on account of their style, which is marked by great fidelity to the original, and by the fact that in these alone the backs of the canvases have been treated with oil as a preservative. Two of them were incorporated in Griffiths's book as plates 6 and 7 of *Cave I* (compare with plate 7 Nos. XII and XIII in this publication). A third is in good preservation, and is framed and exhibited. It is divided down the middle, and its subjects are portions of Jātaka scenes. That of the left half is the capture of a great snake; and the right half is a palace scene in which female musicians are playing before a king and queen (cf. No. XV (17)). The fourth picture, the Great Buddha, No. XI (13), is in a sad state: it shows signs of having been stripped in haste from its frame, and the surface is dulled—the effect, possibly, of smoke and water. It is of interest as explaining some details in the original frescoes which had by 1910 become obscure and supplying others which time had obliterated. It may later on be repaired and exhibited.

In 1872 Mr. Fergusson and Dr. Burgess urged upon the Indian Government the necessity of replacing Major Gill's copies, and Mr. John Griffiths was asked to visit the caves and report. On the strength of this report an annual grant was sanctioned, and in 1875 Mr. Griffiths, with the help of students from the Bombay School of Art, began the work. This lasted, with three years' intermission, until 1885, costing between £2,000 and £3,000. The copies were sent to the South Kensington Museum. Mr. Griffiths's proposal that duplicate copies should be made was negatived, though photographs were taken (see 'Short Bibliography', No. 6). On June 12, 1885, out of 125 canvases, containing in some cases several pictures, which had been sent to South Kensington, 87 were destroyed, or damaged, by fire: from the residue Mr. Griffiths subsequently edited for Government *The Paintings in the Buddhist Caves at Ajantā*, London, 1896, in two large folio volumes containing 156 plates besides illustrations in the text. A further 56 copies were added by Griffiths in 1887 and 1892, mostly in order to replace those which had been in existence before the fire. Of some hundred of the original copies, which remain at present, 56 are exhibited on the walls of the Indian section of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

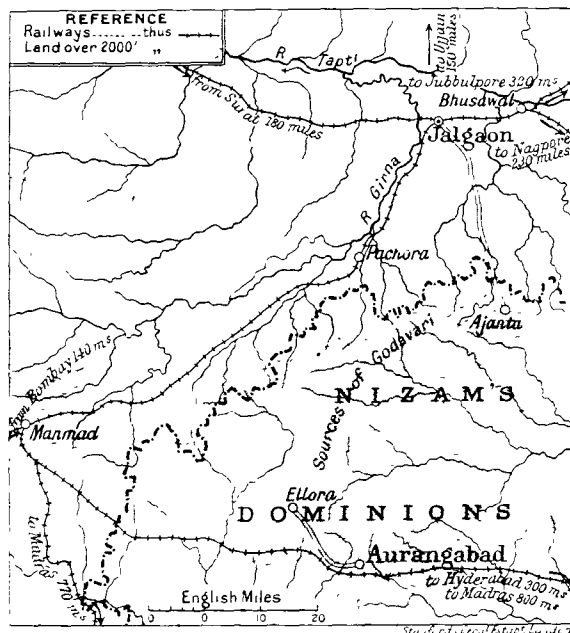
Titles of works which deal specially with Ajantā will be found in the 'Short Bibliography', entered under the Nos. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 20, 24, 25, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44, 48, 49.

THE EXPEDITION

By SIR WILMOT HERRINGHAM

LADY HERRINGHAM first went to India in the winter of 1906-7. At that time, on the suggestion of Mr. Laurence Binyon of the British Museum, she visited both Ellora and Ajantā, and she travelled widely both north and south to see the architectural monuments in which India, beyond all other countries, is rich. While at Ajantā she, herself a painter, was deeply interested in the frescoes that remain on the walls of the rock-hewn temples and monasteries there, and she made a rough sketch of a large Buddha that forms one of the subjects. The interest of Mr. Binyon in the sketch and in her account of the paintings still visible on the walls, added to her own, led her to make a second visit in the winter of 1909-10 and a third in 1910-11. In the course of the former she spent

precipitous hillside, so that the entrance of the first faces the black mouth of the last, at a distance of some 500 yards. Between the columns of many of the temples are hung great nests of wild bees, which must be carefully humoured to prevent dangerous hostilities; and in the deep recesses gibbering bats crawl sidling along the rock cornices, unaware that the concentrated stench of their centuries of occupation is their most formidable defence against man's intrusion. Standing on the terrace, you look down upon the river bed curving away to a waterfall on the right, and beyond it rises a sloping rocky hill covered with scrub. In the rains the river becomes a mighty torrent, but in winter it dwindles to a stream with a few pools in it. Green parrots fly across it



ELLORA AND AJANTA

about six weeks, and in the latter more than three months, at Ajantā in a camp equipped for her by the generosity of the Nizam of Hyderabad, in whose territory Ajantā lies. On both occasions she had the help of Indian students, Syad Ahmad and Muhammad Fazl ud Din of Hyderabad, Nanda Lal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and Samarendranath Gupta, from the Calcutta School of Art, who were sent at the expense of Mr. Abanindranath Tagore, and worked with her and under her direction; and in the second winter she was assisted by Miss Dorothy Larcher, who went out from England with her.

These temples are hewn out of the solid hill which forms one side of a romantic valley thirty-four miles south of Jalgaon, a station about 200 miles from Bombay on the line to Calcutta. The village of Fardāpur, where there is a Dāk Bungalow, in the compound of which Lady Herringham's camp was pitched, is about four miles from the caves by a track over which only bullocks could pull a cart. About a mile of this has to be done on foot up the bed of the river, at the end of which there is a steep flight of stone steps leading to a rough terraced path, which connects the colonnaded façades of the twenty-seven temples. These are cut in the wide concave sweep of

in the sunshine; monkeys, boars, and an occasional panther haunt it; and black buck feed in the valley. Everywhere on the banks are long bottle-shaped birds' nests, something like those of our long-tailed tit. It is a wild and beautiful place.

In addition to her own artistic work and the supervision of the work of others, Lady Herringham had on her hands the management of the camp, the treatment of many sick persons who came to her from the neighbouring villages, and even of sick animals, besides the care of guests who from time to time visited her. Almost all provisions had to be obtained from Bombay and fetched from the nearest station, which was over thirty miles away. With bullock carts the journey takes about seventeen hours each way. The camp was, however, a great pleasure to her. She loved the freedom and the simple country surroundings of the life, and she much appreciated the open and friendly intercourse with the young Indian gentlemen who were her assistants. She was, moreover, deeply interested in the work before her; for she felt that she was face to face with the remains of a great civilization and a great art, of which little is left but tradition.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF THE PAINTINGS

BY LADY HERRINGHAM (WRITTEN IN 1911)

THESE copies from the Ajantā frescoes were made by myself and one English and several Indian painters during the winter seasons of 1909-10 and 1910-11. Previous copies have shown all the blemishes and holes in the plaster. We have thought it advisable, for the sake of the beauty of the composition and of intelligibility, to fill up the smaller holes. But, though some people may call this restoration, altering our work from literal copies to studies, I think we may fairly claim that this omission of damage has been done very cautiously, and the unfinished look of the copies is the consequence of our restoring so little. A copy of a damaged picture must necessarily look like the copying of a badly painted or unfinished one. In reality, the technique of the original work is so sure and perfect, that we none of us were good enough executants to repeat it.

It is a remarkable fact that the finest period of Sanskrit literature (A.D. 300 to 750) and what we may call the Old Picture Gallery of Ajantā are broadly contemporary with one another. Further, one centre of this outburst of splendid romance and play-writing was the beautiful and stately city of Ujjayinī (now Ujjain), not so very far away to the north, and it is quite reasonable to conjecture that these two places may have belonged to the same region of cultural and artistic development, although the religion of the literature is Brahmanical and that of the Ajantā painting purely Buddhist.

In later Mahratta times the fortified towns of Ajantā and Fardāpur (where we camped), each four miles from the Caves in different directions, guarded a most important pass through the Vindhya mountains. Aurungzeb was sometimes at Ajantā. Later still this pass was the scene of much fighting between Wellington's troops and the Mahrattas. The district was probably always of great military importance. The old fort and elephant-spiked gates still remain.

The following extract from the romance of the Princess Kādambarī, written about the middle of the seventh century, indicates the importance and prevalence of (fresco) painting at this period :—

There is a city named Ujjayinī, the proudest gem of the three worlds, the very birth-place of the Golden Age. . . . The painted halls that deck it are filled with gods and demons, Siddhas (attendants on Śiva), Gandharvas, genii, and snakes. . . . The city stretches like a suburb with its long houses; it bears in its painted halls the mirror of all forms. (See *The Kādambarī of Bāṇa*. Translated by C. M. Ridding, London, 1896, pp. 210 sqq.)

In another passage the reflection of the princess is described as 'mingled with the decorations and the polished surfaces and mirrors of her pavilion, while the universe in the guise of pictures on the wall gazes upon her beauty'. The portrait

of the Princess Śakuntalā is described at length in the very beautiful play of that name [in Act VI].

Fergusson considers that it is the Ajantā ravine with its temples that is referred to by the Chinese pilgrim, the Buddhist monk, Hiuen Tsang, who travelled in India during the first half of the seventh century. He says that no other spot in India would sufficiently correspond to the description preserved by the monk, who, however, did not visit the place himself :—

On the eastern frontiers of the kingdom [of Pulikeśi, King of Mahārāshṭra], there is a mountain range with summits rising one above another, chains of rocks, double peaks, and scarped crests. Formerly a convent was constructed there in a gloomy valley. Its lofty edifices and deep halls formed wide openings in the cliffs, and clung on to the heights. Its verandahs and two-storied towers were backed on the caverns and looked towards the valley. This monastery was built by the Arhat Āchāra. The *Vihāra* of the convent is about 100 ft. high. In the middle there is a stone statue of Buddha about 70 ft. high [probably the colossal recumbent Nirvāṇa Buddha of *Chaitya No. XXVII*, confused with a smaller erect figure elsewhere]. It is surmounted by seven small domes in stone, suspended in the air without any visible support. They are separated from each other by a space of about three feet. [This would be the sacred stone umbrella of *Chaitya No. X*.] According to the ancient accounts in the country they are supported by the force of the vows of the Arhat. According to some people this prodigy is due to his supernatural power, and according to others to his scientific knowledge. But it is useless to seek an explanation from history of the prodigy. All around the *Vihāra* the surfaces of the rock are sculptured with representations of the life of the Tathāgata [Buddha], wherever he was a Bodhisattva, the auguries which announced his Arhatship, and the divine prodigies which followed his entrance into Nirvāṇa. The chisel of the artist has depicted all these events in the most minute detail, without forgetting one. [There is a great deal of sculpture at Ajantā, specially in *Chaitya No. XXVII*, where there is the great Nirvāṇa Buddha; or possibly the Chinese terms might include painting.] Outside the gates of the convent, to the south and to the north, left and right, is a stone elephant [the elephants and the gate exist]. I have heard the people of the country say that from time to time these elephants give terrible cries, which make the earth tremble. Formerly Jina Bodhisattva [Dignāga] often stayed in this monastery. (Translated from M. Stanislas Julien's translation of Hiuen Tshang's '*Mémoires sur les contrées occidentales*,' 2 vols. Paris, 1857-8, vol. ii, pp. 151-2.)

The monastery halls and the *Chaityas* which contain the frescoes, and which are almost exactly like apsed Romanesque churches with barrel-vaulting for nave and aisles, are excavated in the face of a great semicircular cliff, at the foot of which flows a stream, turbid and swirling in the rains like a glacier torrent. The Buddhist monks loved wild, mountainous spots for retreat and contemplation; but perhaps they never made a better choice than this particular ravine, and no other place has finer 'architecture,' except perhaps Ellora. Not nearly

enough attention has been given to the proportions chosen for these halls, and to the rich decorations of the columnar 'orders' executed at about the date of St. Sophia, and before the birth of the Saracenic and early West European styles.

Copies of detached portions of these wall-paintings, deprived of their surroundings and framed, can give very little notion of the real effect of the whole. Probably every part of every chamber was originally painted, or intended to be painted. The principal remains now are in *Vihāras I, II, XVII, and XVIII*, and *Chaityas IX, X, XIX*. The first four may be imagined as square halls, about 65 feet each way, with flat ceilings from 12 to 14 feet high, supported by some twenty massive columns, making a rectangle of apparently six to a side. In the back wall there are recessed shrines containing colossal figures of the Buddha. In the front wall there are doors and windows. This provides an immense wall-space. The *Chaityas* offer much less wall-space, and most of their painting has perished. There is also, unfortunately, very little left in *No. XVI*. The aisles formed by the columns are to some extent thrown into sections by occasional piers, but except this there are no divisions between the paintings, nor are they surrounded by ornamental borders.

The paintings represent the tale or incidents in a sort of continuous manner. The same personages appear two or more times, only grouped variously, according to the subject. There are what one might call nucleus points—points of interest—in the narration, with a certain number of connecting links. The transition from episode to episode is managed by such a device, among many, as that of a man looking through or guarding a doorway, sometimes by the continuousness of the pictorial-architectural background. The impression is not so much that the walls were surfaces to be decorated, as that they offered precious space on which the legends might be depicted for the edification of the devout. The frequent cell doors and the piers had the effect of causing variously shaped spaces, often small. It looks as if these were sometimes allotted to the aspiring artist as the only 'hanging room' available.

The pictures illustrate events in the life of the Prince Gautama Buddha and in the more popular of the Jātaka stories, that is, the stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations, perhaps also some scenes of semi-mythological history. Incidentally they illustrate the court life and popular life of the time, as told in the romances and plays.

The paintings certainly spread over 200 years—from 450 to 650. Fergusson sees a strong resemblance between the pictures and types of *Chaityas IX* and *X* and the Sāñchi bas-reliefs of about A.D. 100 (*Chaitya IX* itself may be considerably older). Dr. Vogel, of the Imperial Archaeological Survey, said positively this last winter that the inscription 'Śibi Rājā' on the knees of a seated king in *No. XVII* is in characters of the Gupta period of about A.D. 500. This I believe to be one of the latest paintings in *No. XVII*. *No. XVI* has generally been thought to be rather earlier in date, and *Nos. I* and *II* certainly much later.

There are at least twenty different kinds of painting. Some pictures recall Greek and Roman composition and proportions; a few late ones resemble the Chinese manner to a certain extent; but the majority belong to a phase of art which one

can call nothing except Indian, for it is found nowhere else. In one respect the composition is unlike most Chinese painting, for there is not much landscape. The figures occupy the field, often grouped in a manner which recalls the alto-relievo of sculpture. Some subjects still remain very little darkened by the smoke of pilgrims' fires or the varnish of copyists, and not much injured by the bigotry of iconoclasts; and these are of great assistance in the disentangling of the more spoiled portions. Nearly all the painting has for its foundation definite outlines, generally first on the plaster a vivid orange red, corrected and emphasized with black or brown as the painting proceeded. The outline is in its final state firm, but modulated and realistic, and not often like the calligraphic sweeping curves of the Chinese and Japanese. The drawing is, on the whole, like mediæval Italian drawing.

In the copying our first business was to find and trace these outlines, and our next not to lose them as we proceeded with the subsequent colouring. However darkened or decayed the surface may be, they can nearly always be made out. The composition and incident of many of the pictures could be recovered in this way where the colour and modelling would be almost conjectural. We have attempted to give some notion of differences of technical style, but it is not easy to do this. The quality of the painting varies from sublime to grotesque, from tender and graceful to quite rough and coarse. But most of it has a kind of emphatic, passionate force, a marked technical skill very difficult to suggest in copies done in a slighter medium.

To me the art is of a primitive, not decadent, nature, struggling hard for fresh expression. The artists had a complete command of posture. Their seated and floating poses especially are of great interest. Their knowledge of the types and positions, gestures and beauties of hands is amazing. Many racial types are rendered; the features are often elaborately studied and of high breeding, and one might call it stylistic breeding. The drawing of foliage and flowers is very beautiful. In some pictures considerable impetus of movement of different kinds is well suggested. Some of the schemes of colour composition are most remarkable and interesting, and there is great variety. There is no other really fine portrayal of a dark-coloured race by themselves.

The Ajantā pictures have one great advantage over most Indian sculpture, which was, it seems, frequently covered with a thin white *chunam* (plaster), then coloured. At the Kailāsa of Ellora there are early unspoiled specimens where the plaster has been carefully picked out and finished with a sharp tool; but, generally speaking, it has perished, leaving a rather rough stone foundation, or it has been overlaid and thickened till all delicacy is lost. But the painting is, in many cases, just as the artist left it; at any rate it is not re-painted and clogged. This is partly why it is so much more interesting than the dull, debased Gandhāra sculpture; but also because it is full of vigour and variety and freshness—rejuvenescence. Italian *niello Quattrocento* is full of reminiscence of the classic; but it is new and fresh for all that, and so is this Indian *Quattro-* and *Cinquecento* without the *niello*. To see all this there must be patience and powerful lamps, or more patience in waiting for the short spells of natural light when level rays of sunlight fall on the

floors and are reflected on the walls. Many people go with a candle and see almost nothing.

There are three long inscriptions at Ajantā cut in rock, one in *Cave XVI*, one in *XVII*, and one in *XXVI*. Fresh squeezes were taken by the Government Department of Archæology while we were there, and we may get new translations. That of *Cave XVI* is in praise of the kings of the Vākāṭaka race. It seems to begin with a salutation to Buddha—to 'him who removed the intense fire of misery of the three worlds',—and then relates the genealogy of the King Vindhyaśakti, 'in prowess comparable to Purandara (Indra) and Upendra (Vishṇu)', the lion of the Vākāṭaka race; other kings follow; but, as the translation stands, it seems as if the son of a certain Hasti Bhoja was minister to one of the kings, and that he was the donor of *No. XVI*, who, 'for the benefit of father and mother, established the cave' (or house). We must piece together the fragments which tell of 'the arrangement of pleasing pillars—the great place of rest—where there is an opportunity of enjoying extreme happiness . . . on the most beautiful mountain . . . the mountain resorted to by the great . . . whose top is occupied by caves of various kinds'.

In two other documents there are corroborations of this inscription. On a copper plate found at Seoni, recording a grant of land to a Brahmin, there is an enumeration of

Kings Pravarasena, Rudrasena, and others of this dynasty—one of them marrying a Gupta princess, which is clearly recognized as a very grand alliance.

In an article by Bhau Daji, in vol. vii (pp. 53–74) of the Bombay Asiatic Society's Journal, it is stated that the Vishṇu Purāṇa makes Vindhyaśakti chief of the Kailakila Yavanas; and the Vāyu Purāṇa makes him the father of Pravīra (Pravarasena), performer of various sacrifices also alluded to in the Seoni copper plate. This Yavana blood is employed by Bhau Daji to point the theory that the painting is Bactrian Greek. As has been said already, traces of something that may broadly be called Greek influence may be found there; but the interest lies more in the departures from this type than in the reminiscence itself.

It is noticeable that, while the Ajantā inscriptions in *Nos. XVI* and *XVII* are Buddhistic, praising Munirāj (Śākyamuni Buddha) in various terms and insisting on the merit of giving *Vihāras* and *Chaityas* to the monks, the Seoni copper plate is concerned with the worship of Śiva Maheśvara; the King Pravarasena is the protected of Śiva, and his ancestor and namesake has performed nine kinds of Brahmanical sacrifices.

NOTE.—A discussion of the date of the caves by Mr. Vincent Smith (see *Nos. 48* and *50* in the 'Short Bibliography') supports the conclusion reached by Lady Herringham on the preceding page as to the date of the frescoes.

NOTE ON THE MANNER OF TAKING THE COPIES

By MISS DOROTHY M. LARCHER

It is nearly impossible to get at once an impression of the whole of the largest compositions without the aid of artificial light. The acetylene lamps which we used gave a good general light over two-thirds of a wall, and this was useful for completing copies. For tracing frescoes in dark parts a strong motor lamp on a tall three-legged stand, and so arranged that the light could be turned on to the top or bottom of a wall, would have been most satisfactory. Oil lamps are possible, but they are difficult to manage, and the light is not so concentrated. In some cases, of course, it is light enough to copy without lamps.

In some of the paintings the colour has become so dark as to be scarcely distinguishable from the black outline. The work was also very difficult, when the paintings were near the tops of the walls. In these cases we used rough, locally made steps, which swayed considerably, and had to be held by coolies. I found that, when the painting was very much darkened with age, the best way of tracing accurately was to fasten the two top corners of the tracing paper with adhesive slips, roll it up quickly from the bottom with the left hand, look at the outline, roll the paper back, and trace. In this way it is easier to copy the various thicknesses of line; and it is most necessary to draw the lines freely on the paper. The outline everywhere is very sensitive.

When the coloured copies were made, a fairly rough tracing was done first and transferred to the painting paper on the frames, and the outline accurately copied from the fresco afterwards, but in the case of those intended to remain as outlines, the exact tracing was made on the wall. The coloured copies were executed on thick cartridge paper, canvas-backed, and stretched on wooden frames. For travelling the paper was taken from the frames, rolled, and packed in cylindrical tins.

That wonderful picture, the 'Ceylon Battle', has been included here; although it was not entirely to Lady Herringham's satisfaction. It is the largest painting of all; and, although

the surface is broken in many places (intentionally and otherwise), the colour still retains a good deal of brilliancy. It is a noble composition, and contains separate groups which in themselves are gems—the splendid elephants swaying through the archway ready for battle, the fighting with spears, the flying arrows, the terrible demons, the exquisite group of dancing-girls and musicians above, and the anointing of the king—all these are united in one marvellous whole. The line in this picture has an assurance and delicacy even surpassing those of other pictures at Ajantā.

On first entering the halls of Ajantā it is very difficult to see the paintings on the walls clearly, and those who have journeyed from far away to see these wonderful frescoes will experience a sense of shock at the darkness which age has given them. But, if such a one will wait a while before deciding to be disappointed, gradually the figures of kings and their gracious queens, of maidens and courtiers, of dancing-girls and musicians, hunters and all kinds of animals, will emerge from the walls, as if by magic, and dominate these ancient temples. I think that at dead of night one could hear the soft clashing of anklets, and that, in the silence, glances which flash from those long eyes might even break into whisperings.

There is a significance in the very remoteness of these kings and queens who reign for ever in passionate calm. The faces have nearly always that expression of gracious aloofness which is characteristic of all the best Indian sculpture and painting. In a few cases a passing emotion has been allowed to show in the features. In the temple known as *Cave I* is an unspeakably wonderful figure of a Bodhisattva, holding a lotus in his hand. It is impossible to describe the majesty and gentleness of this figure. As in all Indian paintings, there is a deeply sympathetic treatment of animals, trees and plants; and it is interesting to remark that all the plants which are represented in the frescoes are to be found growing in the ravine to-day.

THE PLACE OF THE AJANTA PAINTINGS IN EASTERN ART

By LAURENCE BINYON

THE frescoes of Ajantā have for Asia and the history of Asian art the same outstanding significance that the frescoes of Assisi, Siena and Florence have for Europe and the history of European art. The whole course of art in Eastern Asia is bound up with the history of Buddhism in its successive phases : and the student of that art finds himself continually referring back to Ajantā as the one great surviving monument of the painting created by Buddhist faith and fervour in the land which gave birth to that religion. The frescoes discovered during the last few years in Central Asia, in Khotan, at Turfan, at Tun-huang, and other sites have only enhanced the interest which the Ajantā frescoes inspire. Just as Mahāyāna Buddhism in its progress and triumph through those central regions to China and Japan flowed into new forms and absorbed elements from other races and other religions, so Buddhist art in the lands beyond India flowed into fresh moulds and took on a certain character of its own. The points of resemblance between the earliest and the latest Buddhist art are obvious enough. In the modern Buddhist painting of Japan the symbolism, the types, the imagery are of Indian origin. But on a broad comparison of the Buddhist painting of China and Japan with the frescoes of Ajantā differences equally remarkable emerge. It is true that the Ajantā series represents no single effort, but a sequence spread over several centuries and embodying several styles and tendencies. Yet, in the Buddhist painting of the Farther East, as we know it, we cannot but be struck by the absence of those features and characteristics which are the chief merit and attraction of the art of Ajantā. The supreme creations of the Buddhist painters in China and Japan belong to an art of impassioned contemplation. And the objects of that contemplation are serene compassionate figures—the figures above all of Amitābha and his spiritual son Avalokiteśvara—painted, so to speak, on darkness, and luminous in their supernatural grandeur. Rarely is there any dwelling on the events of Śākyamuni's earthly life : Śākyamuni himself indeed occupies a secondary position. But in the cave-temples of Ajantā we feel ourselves

in the presence of an art of a quite different character for the most part. The artists of Ajantā are far less at home in the supernatural atmosphere, where celestial beings seem to float of their own essence, than in the world of men and women, of animals, of red earth, green plants, the sunshine and the shadows. The most beautiful of their paintings are taken from the Jātaka stories, the legends of the earthly life of the Buddha in various successive existences. Here was opportunity for grappling with the rich complexity of life, and the painters availed themselves of it to the full. There is no reduction to formula. These men painted Indian life as they saw it ; and, though we feel the glow of a religious impulse behind their creation, we are above all impressed with their intuitive discovery of the beauty in natural movement, unstudied attitude, spontaneous gesture. These are seized upon with a genius for significant, expressive form. How admirable too is their sense for the character of animals and birds, the geese, the deer, above all, the elephant !

This fresh vigour, the exuberance of life, which contains with all its joyousness the capacity for deep melancholy and compassion, is the dominant impression left on me by the contemplation of Lady Herringham's beautiful copies. Paradoxical as it may seem, these frescoes, for all their high importance in the history of Buddhist painting, appear to me more, in essence, allied to Western than to Eastern art. They are, after all, the production of a race originally one with the races of Europe. And, though they are so penetrated with Indian character, with its gentleness of movement and suppleness of form, it is from painting like this, showing the same curiosity of interest, the same ardour in grappling with the visible world, the same underlying fervour of faith, that the painting of Europe has been developed since the days of Giotto and the Lorenzetti.

But it is a kind of impertinence in one who has not seen the original frescoes to write about them ; and I leave it to Mr. Rothenstein, who has seen Ajantā with his own eyes, the eyes of an artist, to record his actual impressions.

THE IMPORT OF THE AJANTA PAINTINGS IN THE HISTORY OF ART

By WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

PERHAPS the most striking intellectual difference between the mediæval and the modern world lies in their respective attitudes towards art and science.

The mediæval artist had the high standard of conscience and the technical probity we now expect from the scientific mind, whereas the man of science was looked upon as alchemist and astrologer, and accordingly often used fine gifts for doubtful purposes. The mediæval mind was little interested in any save contemporaneous craftsmanship, while, on the other hand, it cherished the belief that the key to true knowledge lay in the mysteries of the past.

To-day the man of science has become the precise thinker, the engineer the exact and beautiful technician; it is in the painter's studio that the stuffed alligator and the astrologer's chart now hang suspended. Neglecting the rich treasures we could still obtain from living craftsmen, we have during the last generation ransacked the world for examples of the art of the past. Indifferent to the corruption and destruction we encourage, so long as we can fill our houses and museums with the loot of ages, we hold all that has not been made by the hands of our contemporaries as beyond price. We are right in regarding the art of the past with great reverence, but not so much because it is rare and old as because no garment the human spirit has once worn can be without meaning to us. Man has ever put into the work of his hands the most balanced expression of his conception of life. In such works he shows himself to be aware only of the beauty and nobility of all forms of life, perceiving no meanness and no discord. As creator he has for his object nothing short of perfection.

It is because he has always had before him this standard, impossible of realization, that his efforts carry within them the significance and vitality of life itself. To others he leaves the task of speculative inquiry. In the material face of the world he sees the real and the ideal as one. To him the loveliness of the physical fabric of the universe has been the most satisfactory answer to the riddle of life, believing, as he does intuitively, that whatever forces underlie appearance are actually expressed by appearance. If the visible world be illusion, it is a noble and significant illusion which interprets a noble and significant reality.

It is the artist's unquestioning obedience to the hidden laws of form which gives to his work a power transcending our conscious knowledge, and which, in contact with the mind of the spectator, awakens a feeling of exaltation and an added sense of the intrinsic value of life. For this reason the priestly caste has everywhere been quick to make use of this power inherent in works of art. Hence the temple or church is

everywhere not a mere illustration of the creed and ritual practised in each age and each locality, but the powerful symbol of the realities upon which all creeds and all ritual are based.

The rock escarpment at Ajantā is itself one of those marvellous architectural feats which Nature herself sometimes performs, as though to point the way to man in his conception of temple and fortress. Here was already a place symbolizing the vast forces of nature. Indeed, when in company with Lady Herringham and Miss Larcher I visited Ajantā four years ago, to leave the magnificent scene outside and step within the dark and close-smelling *Chaityas* and *Vihāras* was at first to feel disillusioned. But the mind soon attunes itself to these conditions, and slowly there emerge through the dirt and neglect and decay of ages examples of the painter's art more complete perhaps than any which remain to us from ancient times.

In spite of the ruinous condition of the wall-paintings themselves, we must account it good fortune that the small interest hitherto felt in Indian fine art, as well as the great difficulty of the undertaking, has happily prevented the attempt to carry away any of these paintings from the walls. The trouble the traveller must give himself to see them invests his journey with something of the character of a pilgrimage; and not having, as is the case in the museum, a hundred other objects he may be curious to see, he is able to devote himself entirely to these paintings and to lend himself to their influence in much the same way as a pilgrim may have done a thousand years ago.

Mr. Binyon, the most discerning student of Eastern art we have among us, is inclined to consider the Ajantā paintings less spiritual than those of the great Chinese painters. But it must be remembered that the Chinese, like ourselves, borrowed their religion from an alien civilization. The figure of its founder came to them ready symbolized, as it were, and far removed from any actual physical and social relations. They already possessed a highly developed art of their own, the character of which had grown naturally out of their own social life and mental outlook. When with the new religion they adopted the Indian formulas and symbols, they kept these separate from the ordinary practice of their art, and so developed a highly specialized hieratic quality, the rarest and most remote perhaps the art of the painter has ever expressed.

To the Indian mind Buddha and his disciples were more actual figures, with positive relations to their own social world. The places where they lived and taught were to them definite places, to which they themselves could at any moment make

pilgrimages. Although at the time of the Ajantā paintings they had long formulated their materialized conception of contemplation and renunciation, the unique importance of which has never been adequately acknowledged, they had not yet crystallized it into the rigid moulds we have now come to associate, often very falsely, with Indian art. Nor was there that separation between the social and religious traditions which I have alluded to as existing in Chinese art.

It is this broad and comprehensive outlook upon life as a whole, giving to its spiritual quality a sane and normal relation to daily existence, which is so important and delightful an element in the Ajantā paintings. Here we find the artist unconsciously expressing that wise element in Hindu religion which insists upon man first living the life of the householder, providing for his children and performing the common social obligations, before he can give himself up completely to his spiritual needs. In these paintings we get a reflection of that dualism in man—on the one hand his passion for activity, his curiosity, his delight in beauty and the pleasures of the senses, his daring and adventure; on the other his inner reaction against these very things, consequent on the unforeseen disasters and inevitable injustice and cruelties which follow on his many restless and experimental activities.

On the hundred walls and pillars of these rock-carved temples a vast drama moves before our eyes, a drama played by princes and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against a marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plains and in deep jungles, while above the messengers of heaven move swiftly across the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world, in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the loveliness and purity of birds and flowers; and woven into this fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of the spiritual realities of the universe.

It is this perfect combination of material and spiritual energy which marks the great periods of art. At other times this balance is lost, and one or the other is insisted upon with too marked an emphasis. Each succeeding age tries to readjust the balance as it may, until at last that balance is restored, and again we get this supreme quality of proportion and unity.

In the copies here reproduced Lady Herringham and her able lieutenants have been successful, through their perception of this characteristic of the Ajantā paintings, in conveying a great deal of the passion and energy of the original forms. They wisely made no attempt to register the exact condition in which they found the original paintings. But both by their selection of subjects (no easy decision to come to amongst so wide a choice) and by their appreciation of the beauty and significance of these, they have been able to interpret the spirit of conception and of execution in a remarkable way.

Their unselfish labours will give a fresh stimulus to the newly awakened interest in Indian Art. If work like this were also to give people, both in India and at home, a clearer conception of the qualities they may expect to get from contemporary artists and craftsmen, it would be helping a greater thing than scholarship. In the amazing energy and resource of our commercial enterprise, in the passionate attempt to improve our conditions through science and social reform, in the marvellous triumphs of our engineering genius lie our contributions to the upward struggle of mankind. Shall we ask no worthy expression of our ideals and achievements from contemporary craftsmen? Are we to remain satisfied with the trivialities and insincerities which fill our current exhibitions in London and the great provincial centres? Where but a century ago were a few scattered villages, huge cities now stand. Should we not expect to find in these many records of the energy and gallantry of commercial enterprise? Yet in one city alone can we discover a high expression of the significance of local history—I refer to the decorations by Ford Madox Brown at Manchester.

If such reproductions as are here presented are to serve a fruitful purpose, it will not be by the discussion as to whether or no these Ajantā painters were influenced by the painting of Greek artists, but by showing how enduring is the life of a noble vision and a vigorous execution. There is still enough left in these paintings to inspire a whole generation of Indian and European artists, and to point the way to a more intelligent patronage of the arts. The Church has long forgotten her own great mothering past; the aristocracy is cautiously engaged in reaping the harvest sown by those of their ancestors who had the intelligence and courage to employ their own contemporaries; while the democracy, occupied exclusively with its own material improvement, has not yet awakened to the powerful support which the passion and sincerity of artist and craftsman can lend it.

The most vital of human industries are thus the subject of caprice, and are left dependent on such insight as the private patron may possess. It is not through such hazardous chance that the work we are here concerned with came into existence. The passionate expression of material and spiritual beauty which we find throughout the Ajantā paintings is not the result of any accidental influence, Greek or other. Such passion comes, like the blows of a woodman's axe, from a long-trained and consistent will behind it, driving it at the same breach but driving it ever deeper.

So true is the psychological character of these paintings, so remarkable the delineation of human and animal forms, so profound the spiritual portrayal of Indian life, that they may still serve to-day, in the absence of contemporaneous works of the kind, to represent the culture and character, rapidly changing though they now be, of the Indian people.

BUDDHIST CAVE-TEMPLES AND THEIR PAINTINGS

By F. W. THOMAS

CAVES seem to have been in India the earliest form of architecture in stone. They are familiarly mentioned both in the legend and in the surviving inscriptions of the great Buddhist emperor Aśoka (c. 275–235 B.C.); and during the following five or six centuries they are constantly mentioned as an object of pious donations. They had not, however, an exclusively religious destination: from a number of literary allusions it is clear that they were used also as pleasure resorts and for theatrical entertainments; indeed a cave has been discovered (in the Rāmgarh hills) provided with an auditorium, it has been—perhaps too hastily—thought, in a style more or less Greek. But doubtless the religious character prevailed. From the first the caves will have served the double purpose of residences for monks and temples for worship. The two kinds of excavations, commonly distinguished as *Vihāras* (monasteries) and *Chaitya* halls (i. e. halls containing a *Chaitya*, or shrine), have therefore equal claims to antiquity. They continued to be made in close conjunction until the end of the Hindu period in India; and many centuries previously the practice had been carried to Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, and Tibet, where the caves are to be found, in some instances still occupied, even at the present day.

The architecture of Ajantā has been so thoroughly discussed in standard works, such as those of Fergusson, Burgess, and Griffiths, and is so well known from illustrations, that upon this subject hardly anything need be stated here. The caves were usually cut into the sides of cliffs. Their main architectural features are their ornamental portals and vestibules, and the pillars supporting the roofs. The style in the earliest examples, and even in the later ones, bears the most obvious marks of having been copied from edifices in wood; indeed for a long time the use of wooden roof-beams having no structural justification continued to prevail. Later the roofs also were chiselled in stone. It is well known that in some cases temples have been actually carved out of the living rock with internal and external decoration all in one single piece. Astonishing examples of this are to be seen in the Kailāśa temple of the Brahmanic Śaivites at Ellora and the temples at Mahābalipuram.

Such excavated buildings, which in their main features were practically indestructible—only the vestibules and porches being obnoxious to the ravages of time—are naturally of great interest; and they provide incorruptible testimony for the history of architectural changes in India. But they have also served as a vehicle for the preservation of nearly the sole examples of purely Indian painting which have come down to us, the exceptions being a few early frescoes preserved at Sigiriya, and elsewhere, in Ceylon, and the miniatures adorning certain old manuscripts from Nepal, which, if they do not themselves go back beyond the eleventh century A.D., represent a tradition of long standing.

There can be little doubt that the art of painting is older in India than architecture in stone. It is mentioned in the earliest Buddhist scriptures, and also in Brahmanical works (for example, the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) reflecting the same period. These books speak already of painting on cloth, painting on boards, and painting on walls: but the most frequent references are to painted chambers, i. e. chambers having their walls decorated with frescoes. The latter are in later works the subject of some striking descriptions, the most interesting of which are cited in Mr. Havell's *Indian Sculpture and Painting* (pp. 156–63). Drawing, especially drawing of portraits, seems to have been a normal accomplishment of educated persons, both men and women; and sketching without the application of colour must have been quite usual, as we see in the *sgraffiti* from Tibet and Central Asia, and in the cuts illustrating many Tibetan books.

It is interesting to read that the adornment of *Vihāras* with paintings of human forms is said to have been denounced by Buddha himself; and he also forbade his monks to visit the palaces and painted halls of kings, and prohibited the wearing of dress with painted figures. In the *Vihāras* the utmost that he would allow was the representation of garlands, creepers, conventional ornament, and symbolical figures. Contrast with this the later, though still early, tradition which puts into the mouth of Buddha directions such as these:

‘On the outside door (of the *Vihāra*) you must have figured a *Yaksha* holding a club in his hand; in the vestibule you must have represented a great miracle, the five divisions (of beings) of the circle of transmigration; in the courtyard the series of births (*jātakas*); on the door of the Buddha's special apartment (*gandha-kuṭī*) a *Yaksha* holding a wreath in his hand; in the house of the attendants (or, of honour) *Bhikshus* and *Sthaviras* arranging the *dharma*; on the kitchen must be represented a *Yaksha* holding food in his hand; on the door of the storehouse a *Yaksha* with an iron hook in his hand; on the water-house *Nāgas* with various ornamented vases in their hands; on the wash-house foul sprites or the creatures of the different hells; on the medicine-house the *Tathāgata* tending the sick; on the privy all that is dreadful in a cemetery; on the door of the lodging-house a skeleton, bones and a skull.’ Grunwedel, *Buddhist Art in India*, trans. Gibson and Burgess, p. 46 and reff.

A complete scheme of decoration has also been traced by Dr. Grunwedel (to whom we owe also the above citation) in some of the caves of Chinese Turkestan.

These indications seem to suggest a view of the history which lies behind the fresco decoration of the Ajantā caves. We commence with the palaces or picture-halls of kings, which are, no doubt, imitated in the public places of entertainment found in every town and village. From these the use of pictorial decoration passes to the pleasure caves, brilliantly lighted for evening entertainments, and perhaps to the stone temples of the Brahmanic deities. Buddhism, at first puritan in this respect, ultimately adapts itself to the *milieu*, until

painting, and even a scheme of painting, becomes a normal feature of its temples and monasteries.

The application of painting to rock-cut sanctuaries is in some respects surprising, since, in spite of the spacious openings which formed the upper part of the porches, the interior light must have been, even in favourable cases, a dim one, and in others exceedingly faint. The artistic processes employed are discussed above. The manner of the execution constitutes a problem. How were these huge compositions carried out in their ample and crowded designs and their scrupulous detail and firm lines upon walls and ceilings reflecting only a dim religious light? The use of lamps may account in part for the details. But even this partial explanation leaves an unsatisfied question as to colours, which were both (at times) dogmatically significant and artistically delicate and harmonious. The only plausible suggestion must be that the frescoes were actually planned and executed in broad daylight, and subsequently reproduced to scale (or stencilled) in the interiors. Even this explanation would postulate a remarkable quality of hand and vision.

Excepting the caves of Bāgh in Mālwa, which are the subject of a projected publication, those of Ajantā are alone in preserving any considerable remains of Indian fresco-painting. The situation and disposition of the Ajantā group are sufficiently described in the statements of Sir W. and Lady Herringham, and in the above-cited works of Fergusson, Burgess, and Griffiths. The dates, which are determined not only by considerations of style, but also sporadically by the more precise evidence of donative inscriptions, range from the first or second century A.D. to the sixth or even the seventh. Only in a portion of the caves (*Nos. I, II, IX, X, XVI, XVII, XIX, XXII*) are there any considerable remains of fresco decoration, which in some instances (paralleled in existing Tibetan and Ceylonese temples) must have covered the greater part of the interior surfaces, including porches and vestibules, the pillars, the spaces above and between the entrances to shrines and cells, and finally the ceilings. A complete photographic record of what still survives is, it is satisfactory to know, in contemplation, and even in part already carried out; for the present we must be thankful for the indications furnished by the coloured outlines accompanying the plans in Mr. Griffiths's work and the descriptions contained in the *Notes* of Dr. Burgess. The time has not come for the recognition of comprehensive schemes of colour and subject, although a certain symmetry and balance may be traced in the choice of subjects for the decoration of *Cave XVII*. The reproductions in this volume must accordingly be regarded frankly as fragments, having a higher value for the purpose of artistic appreciation than on the archæological side. Of the subjects some are susceptible of immediate recognition, while others can be described only in vague and general terms.

The painting in the caves has an exclusively religious significance, and in its object it is strictly analogous to the sculpture which adorns the topes of Sāñchī and Bhārhut in Central India, and the great monument of Boro-Budur in Java; similar ornament is now abundantly illustrated in the ruins of the Buddhist sanctuaries of Chinese Turkestan. It is not to be supposed that the entire pictorial decoration of each cave was planned at the outset; although there are not a few

examples of great compositions and series of consecutive scenes which must have constituted a single design. Under some of the figures and scenes we find indeed painted inscriptions which show that they were the fruit of some pious donation. As in the case of a Christian cathedral, the decoration was therefore a work of time; and there is evidence in several of the caves that it has been replaced, one scene being found overlying another. In regard to painting, however, we need not allow too long a period for an individual cave. The monks in charge of the temples and monasteries will have been industrious in completing the task, whether with their own hands or by the aid of contributions which they collected. In fact, the writing of the different inscriptions in each cave is generally of quite the same period.

As regards the subjects, we must begin by distinguishing between decoration, portraiture, and narration. The decoration would include, besides patterns and scrolls, also figures of animals, flowers, and trees; then again those of fabulous creatures, monsters, and mythological beings, such as *Kinnaras* with a human bust joined to the body of a bird, *Nāgas*, or snake-powers, generally having the form of a man haloed with the hood of a snake, *Garuḍas*, eagle-figures of the enemies of the *Nāgas*, *Yakshas*, spirits of the air, *Gandharvas* and *Apsarases*, minstrels and nymphs of Indra's heaven. Coming to what we may call portraits, we should not often find isolated representations of the Brahmanic divinities, who, however, frequently appear as attendants, or playing a part in the Buddhist scenes. The detached figures would include the *Lokapālas*, or guardians of the world-quarters, who were often depicted at the entrances in the capacity of *Dvārapālas*, or guardians of the gates, the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the former distinguished from mere monks only by their *ushnīsha*, or protuberance on the top of the head, *ūrṇā*, or interciliar spot, and pendulous ears, the latter richly jewelled, like earthly kings. There are also portrait groups, of which the most important are the 'Tutelary Pair', consisting of Pañchika, generalissimo of the god of riches, seated side by side with his wife Hārītī, the goddess of children, or again the latter in the 'Madonna' form, suckling her youngest born Piṅgala amid a group of her other offspring. The Buddhas themselves appear in various postures, generally seated, following the prescriptions of the books, which distinguish the different significant *mudrās*, or gestures of the hands, indicating the teaching, protective, preaching, or testifying purpose. Among the scenes themselves we should distinguish first of all the traditional events in the earthly life of Gautama Buddha, the most important being the birth; the abandonment of home, in which Buddha is seen riding his good horse Kaṇṭhaka, while the gods hold up the hoofs to prevent any treacherous sound; the 'Illumination', generally in the form of the double attack by the daughters and the army of Māra, god of love and death; the preaching to the gods in the heaven of Indra; and the *Parinirvāṇa*, or death, in which Buddha is seen lying upon a couch. This does not, however, by any means exhaust the customary scenes from the actual life, which include further the various miracles connected with different famous cities, such as Vaiśālī, Śrāvastī, Benares, Rājagṛiha, the visits of kings or rival teachers, the quelling of various monsters. An important place in this group belongs to what has been

termed the 'Transfiguration Scene', in which Buddha creates a double, and other doubles, of himself, with whom he holds converse; a scene specially notable, as accounting for many compositions where groups of Buddhas are to be seen seated upon lotuses. It is in these scenes from the life of Buddha that the Brahmanical gods generally appear, either as spectators in their heavens, or often, in the case of Indra and Brahmā, in attendance upon him on either hand. In this connexion we must not fail to make mention of the *Vajrapāṇi*, or thunderbolt-bearer, who has been variously identified with Māra, with Kuvera, the god of riches, with the Buddhist *Dharma*, or religion, symbolically represented, and with the guardian spirit of Buddha. There remain the narrative scenes, relating the stories of *jātakas*. These celebrated fables, of which various collections exist, both in Sanskrit and in Pali, consist for the most part of popular tales from myth, legend, folk-lore, anecdote, which have acquired a religious value by the identification of one or other of the characters with some previous incarnation of Buddha. It is quite needless to state how large a proportion of Buddhist painting and sculpture is occupied with such tales. Finally we may make mention of scenes depicting actual or pretended historical events, such as the visit of Aśoka to the Bodhi-tree at Bodhi-Gayā or the invasion of Ceylon by Vijaya. It is well known that at Ajantā one large scene in *Cave I* has been supposed to represent the visit of a Persian embassy from Chosroes II (A.D. 590-628) to the court of an Indian king.

The artistic valuation of the painting is contributed by Mr. Rothenstein and Mr. Binyon. But there are a few points of a philological character, which call for some elucidation here. In the first place, it is to be remarked that in appraising narrative pictures, or historical and legendary scenes, it is plainly impossible to do justice to the painters, with their edifying purpose, in the absence of a knowledge of their meaning. Here, unfortunately, we are presented with a number of formidable difficulties. The reading of pictorial stories is in Buddhist literature rendered specially difficult by the not infrequent co-existence of widely differing versions, so that we must know the text which the artist has undertaken to illustrate. If this applies to scenes where the whole composition lies before us, how much more is it so in connexion with the fragmentary remains of Ajantā, saved from the destruction of their entire context?

But not even in regard to isolated figures can we entirely dispense with interpretation. Before we can judge of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva as a work of art we must, if we are to preclude self-deception, ascertain his name and object, how much in him is typical, conventional, and symbolical, and how much is to be attributed to the living imagination of the artist. And the same applies, though in an inferior degree, to other figures, and even to decorative forms, when they have a symbolical value. Fortunately, after all these deductions there is ample material for a strictly aesthetic appreciation.

We shall therefore be justified in touching upon a few matters of this nature, and for convenience we will consider them under numbered heads.

1. In the first place, it may be asked whether in these paintings any symbolical value attaches to the use of *colour*, a question much more easily asked than answered. We have

indeed abundant evidence to prove that in miniatures of Buddhist divinities the colour of the face and dress, as well as the remaining adornment, was minutely prescribed. But, as the colour seems to have varied with the occasion, and also with the grouping, it does not seem possible at present to deal with the Ajantā paintings from the point of view of such symbolism.

As authorities on this subject we may cite Nos. 9, 15, 16, 29, 30, 39 in the 'Short Bibliography' given below.

2. In regard to proportions and outlines a not dissimilar observation must be made. From the literary sources and from actual observation of modern practice in working it is clear that many, if not most, of the figures are composed not simply as an imitation of reality, but in view of some ideal scheme rather precisely conceived in numerical terms. Attention has been very pertinently drawn to the connexion which in the case of Indian art existed between design and the science of physiognomy, itself elaborately detailed. The bodily marks and movements are carefully scrutinized in India, both practically as indications of mind and theoretically as having an auspicious or inauspicious character, and also artistically as excellences or defects. All these points of view would be present to the thought of the artist, and the outcome would represent, apart from the skill or idiosyncrasy of the individual, not simply an artistic conception, but a conjoint ideal, embodying the appropriate combination of beauty, auspiciousness, and significance. In the case of the 'Great Being', whether Buddha or some other supernatural person, there exists a familiar list of 32 *lakṣaṇas*, or auspicious marks, together with 84 minor signs, termed *anuṣṭyāñjanas*.

The reader who wishes to pursue this subject may consult Nos. 6, 8, 23, 26, 27, 34, 40, 54, 56 in the 'Short Bibliography'.

3. As regards dress and emblems, we may begin by referring to what has already been stated in reference to Buddha. The Buddha figure, unlike those of the Jain Tirthaṅkaras, is never unclothed, although the dress is sometimes rather faintly indicated in outline. The ordinary costume of a standing Buddha, and it is the same, though less obviously, with the sitting ones, is a robe of Greek type, copied originally from that of the Lateran Sophocles. Bodhisattvas are attired as Rājās, having richly jewelled head-dresses, necklaces, arm-bands, and the like, and their lower garment secured round the loins by a jewelled scarf, which hangs down in front as far as the feet. Ladies of rank are distinguished by a faintly indicated jacket reaching to the waist and detached from the lower robe, which is encircled at the hips by elaborate girdles of jewels: the transparent texture of the garments creates an illusion of nudity. Other types, castes, &c., are apparently provided with their characteristic attire, concerning which, however, nothing further need be said. (See Mr. Griffiths's work, vol. i, *Introd.* pp. 7-22.)

As regards emblems, it will be sufficient to mention those of the chief Bodhisattvas, the flask of Maitreya, the lotus of Avalokiteśvara, the sword and book of Mañjuśrī, referring for the rest to Nos. 5, 15, 16, 18, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 56, 57 in the 'Short Bibliography'.

4. The gestures of the hands have been already mentioned as significant. A reader desiring precise and illustrated information upon this subject may consult Nos. 5, 15, 16, 18, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 56 in the 'Short Bibliography'.

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F. W. T

NOTE.—For further works relating to Ajantā see p. 15, *supra*, and pp. 280-2 of No. 13 in this Bibliography.

PLATES

PLATE I



PLATE II



(2)



(3)

PLATE III

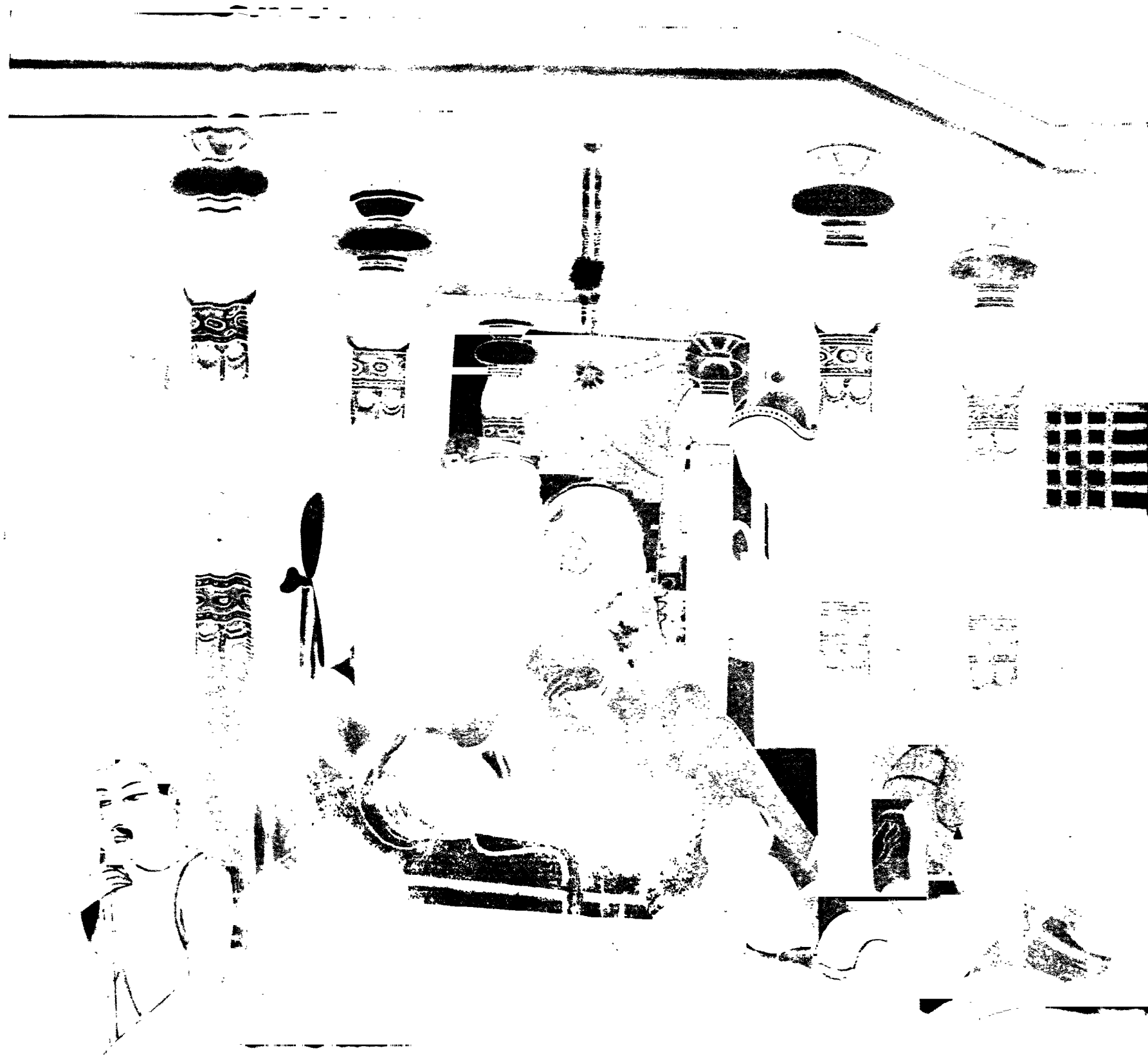


PLATE IV



PLATE V



PLATE VI



(7)



(8)

PLATE VII



PLATE VIII

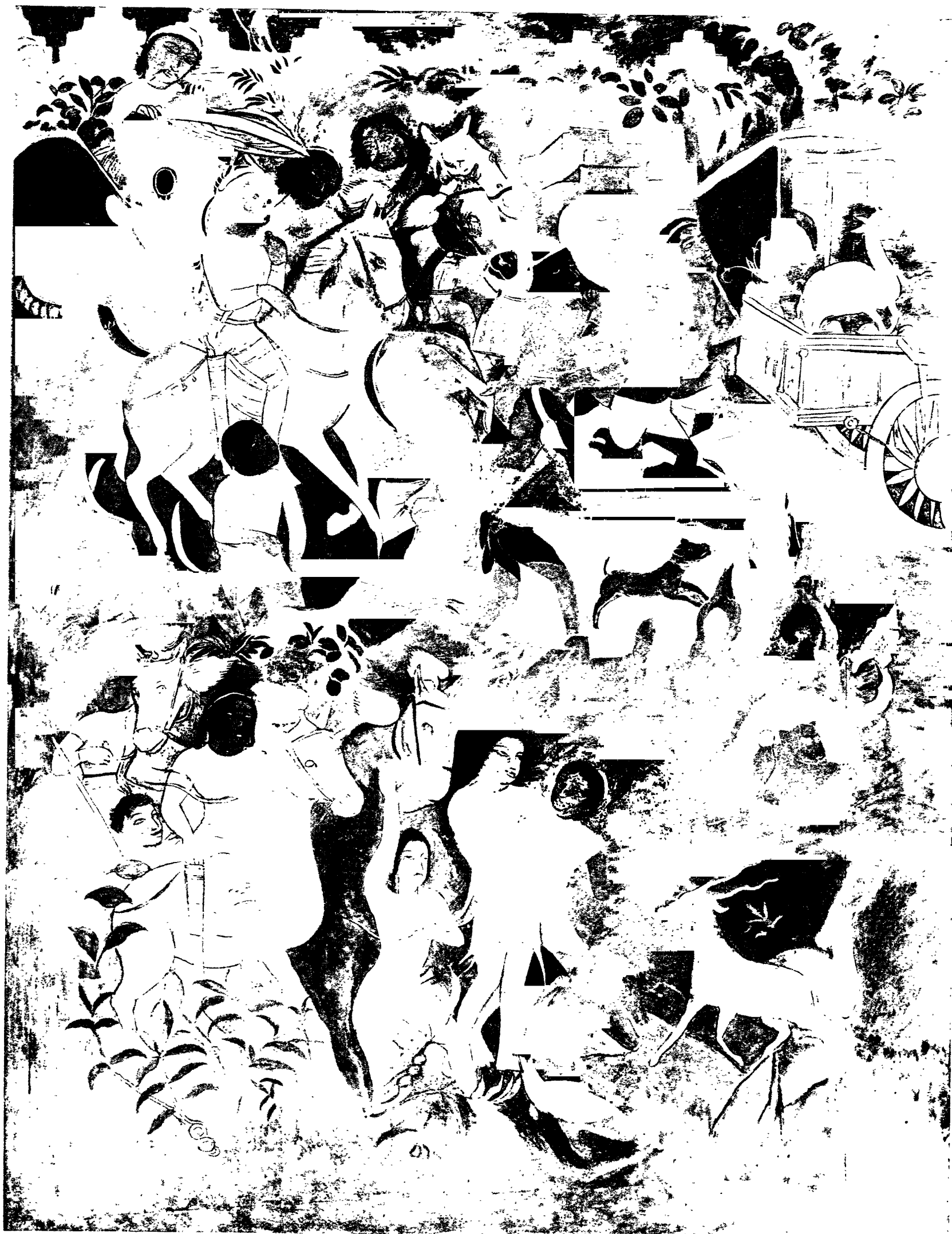


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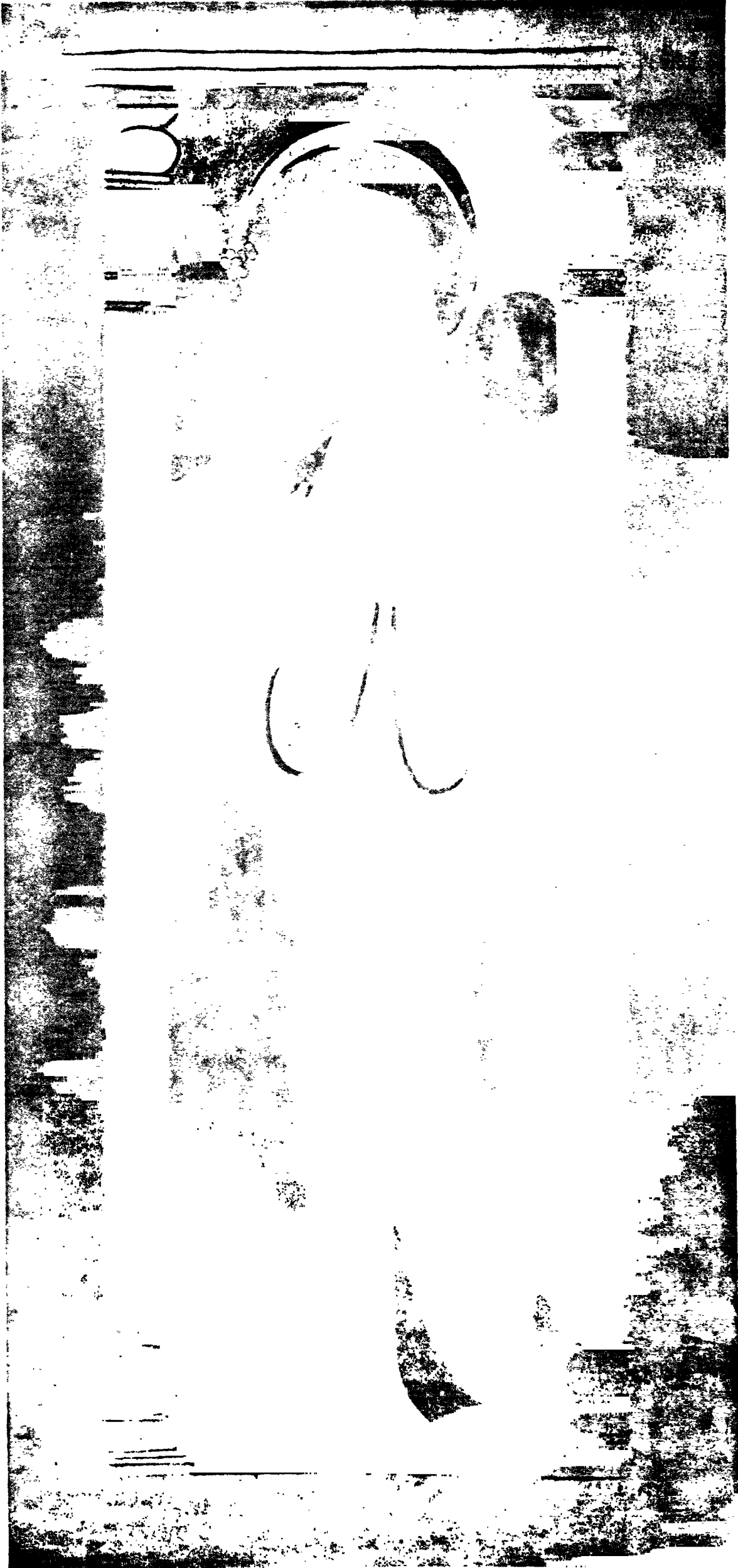


PLATE X



PLATE XI



PLATE XII

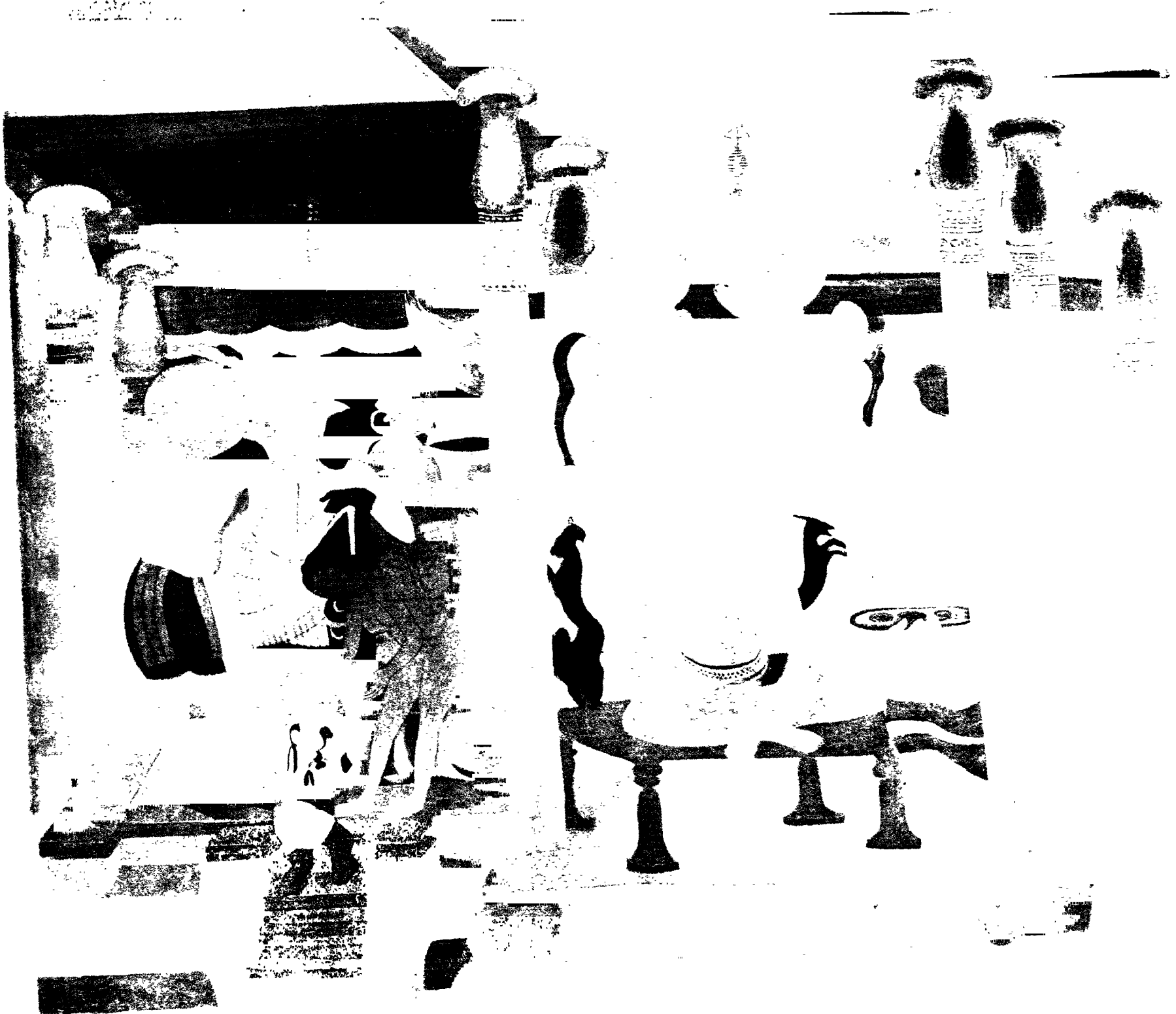


PLATE XIII



PLATE XIV



PLATE XV



PLATE XVI





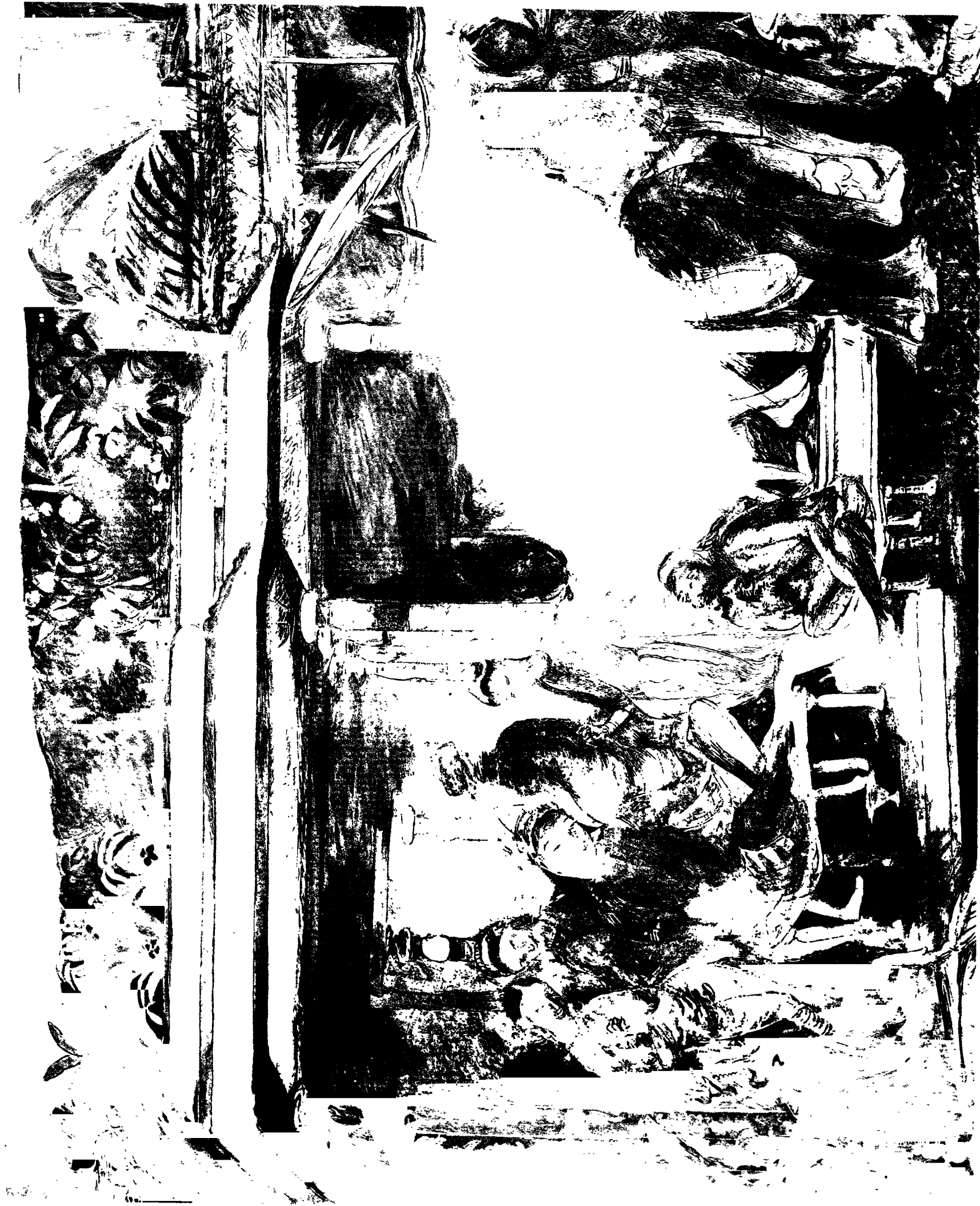




PLATE XX



PLATE XXI





PLATE XXIII



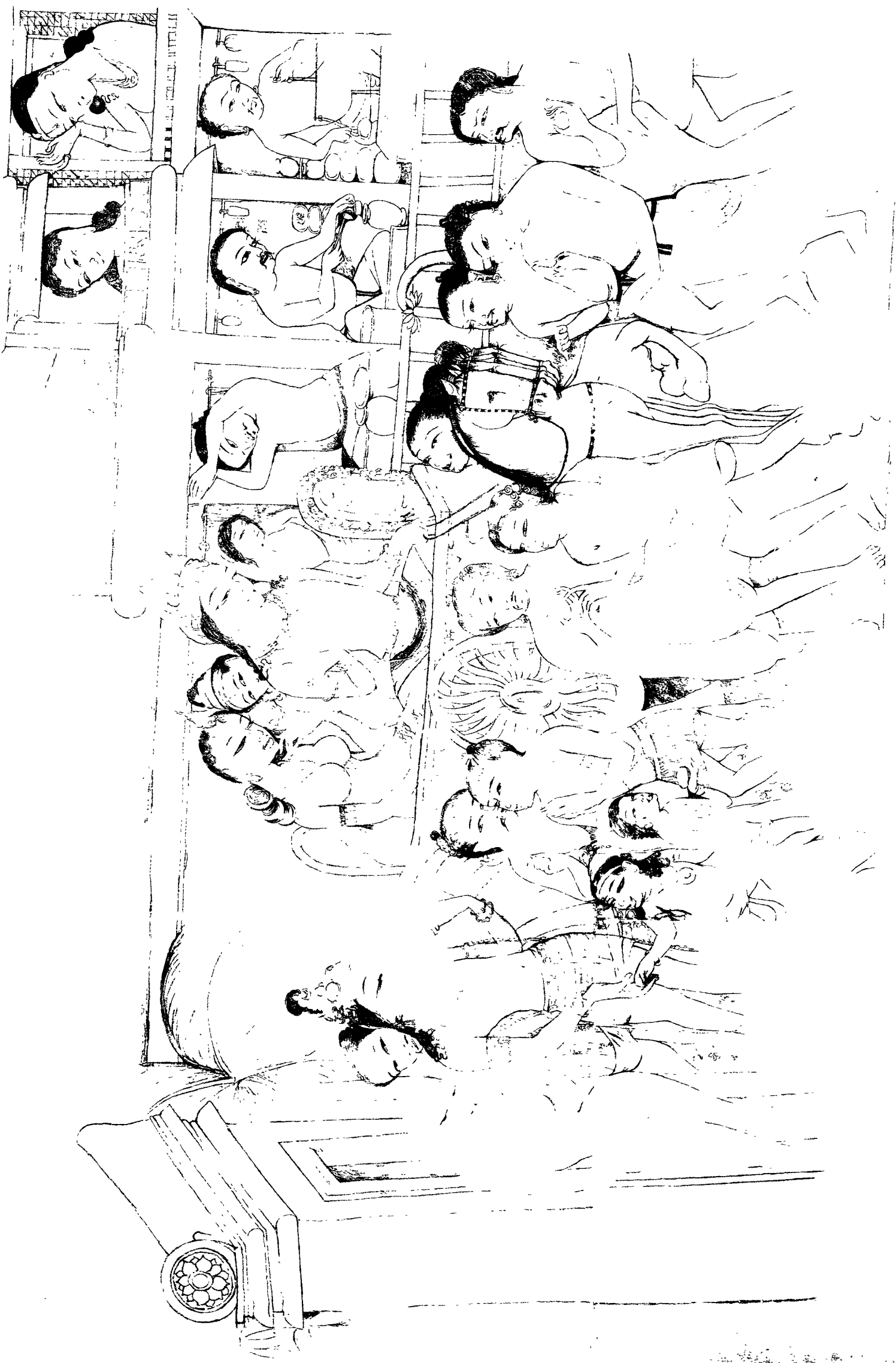




PLATE XXVI







SYED AHMED
1840-1870

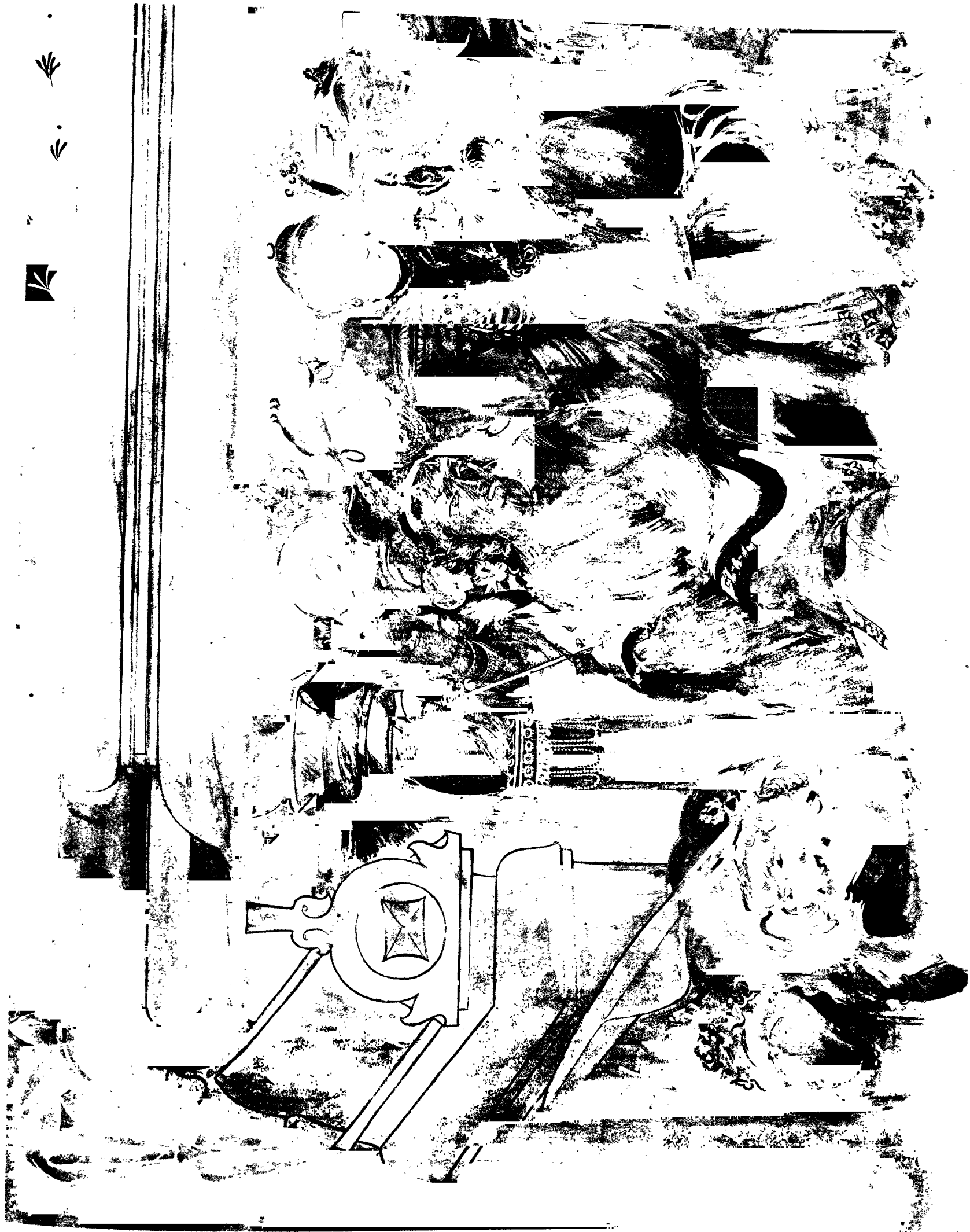


PLATE XXX



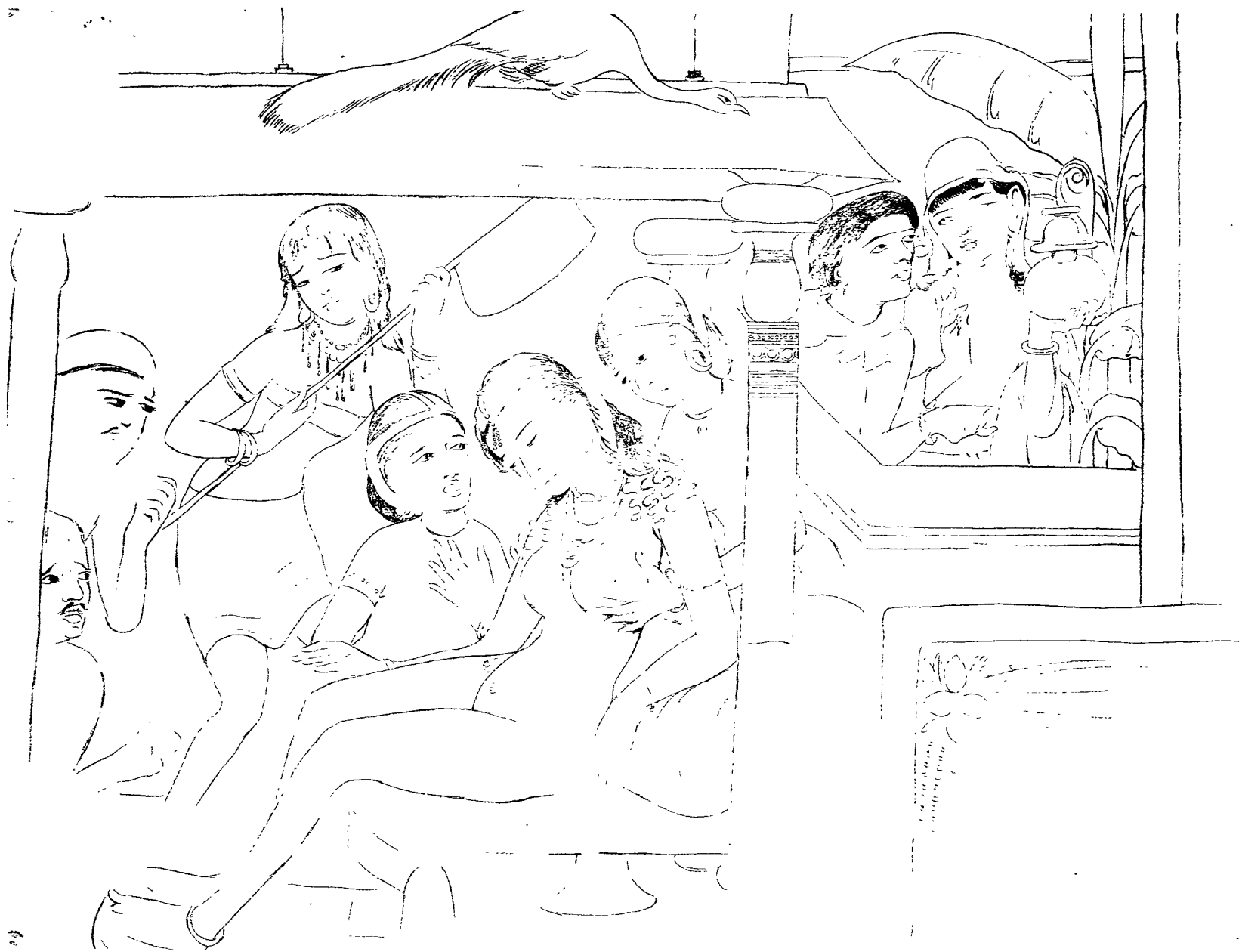


PLATE XXXII









(38)



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PLATE XXXVII



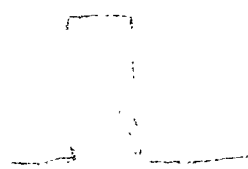
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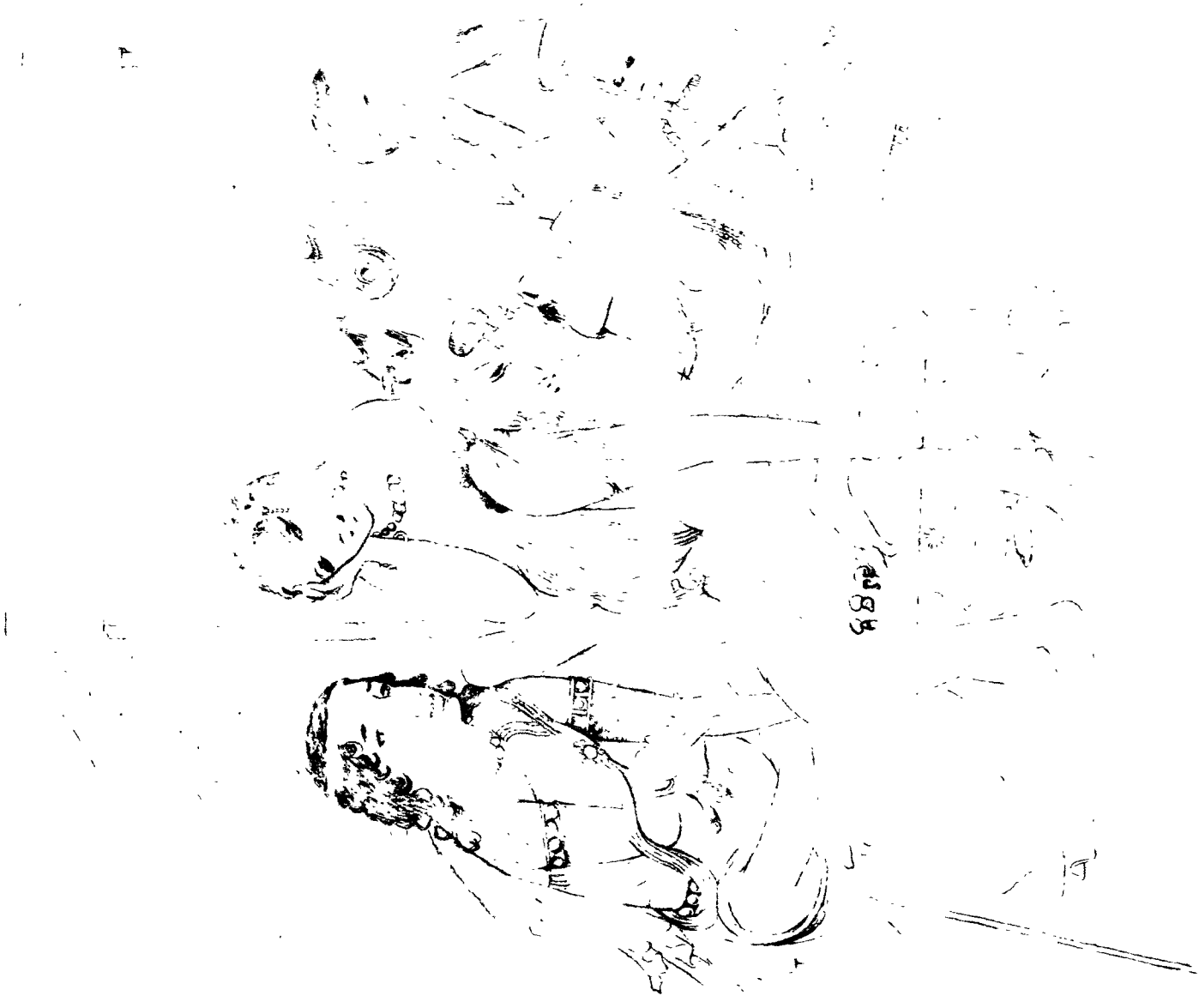
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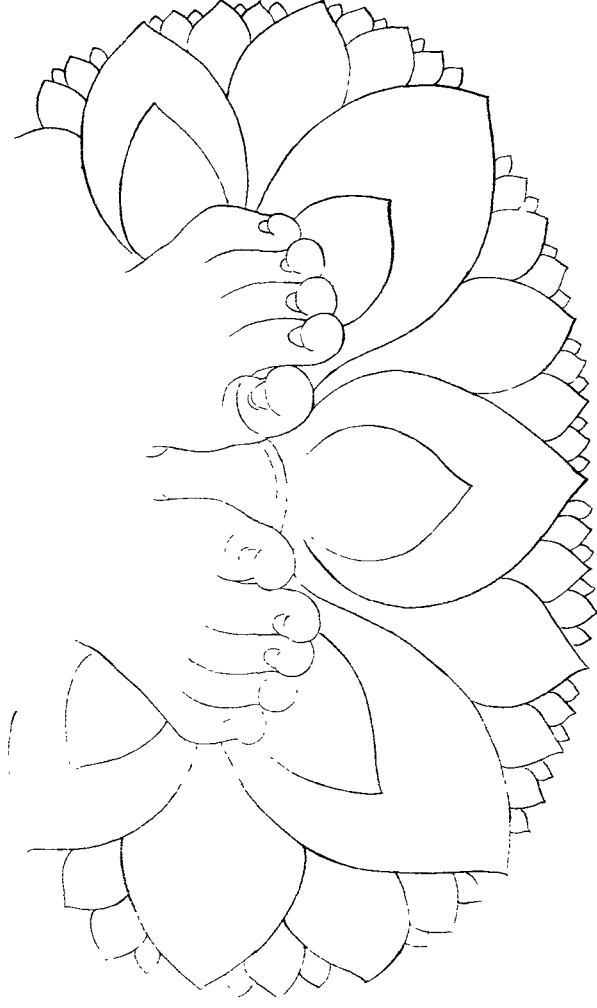
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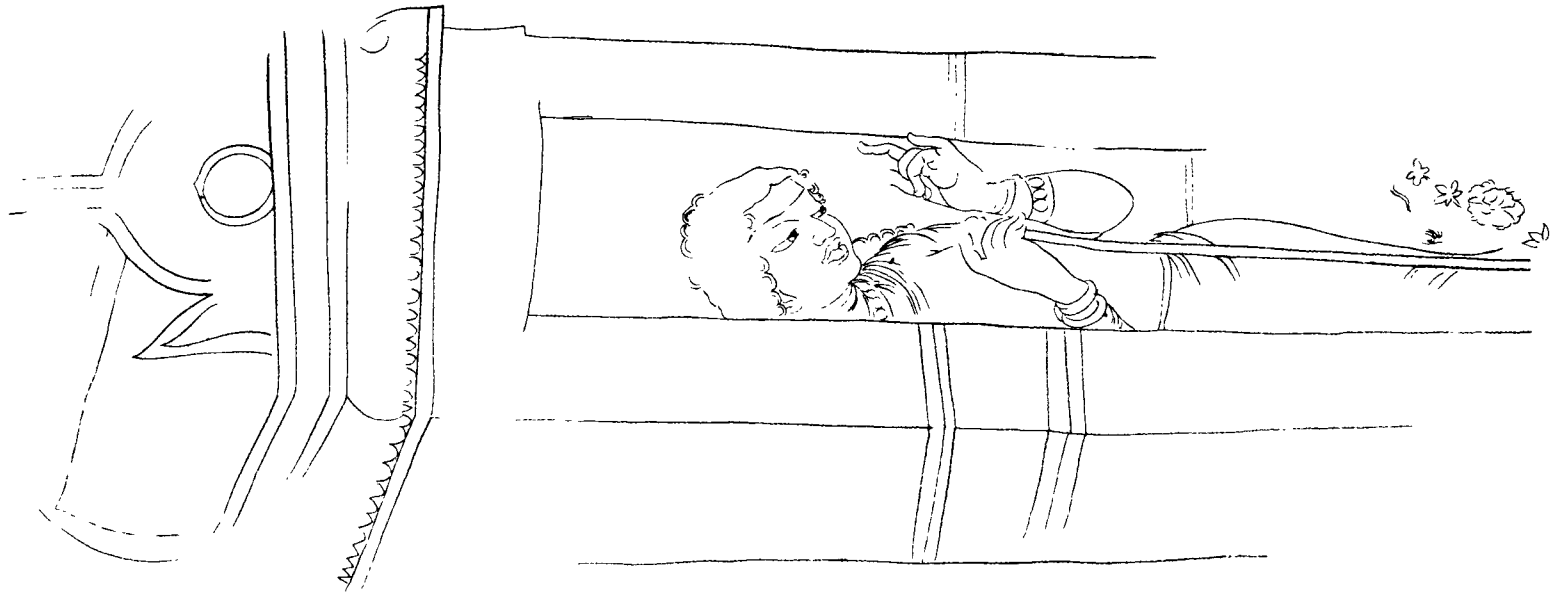
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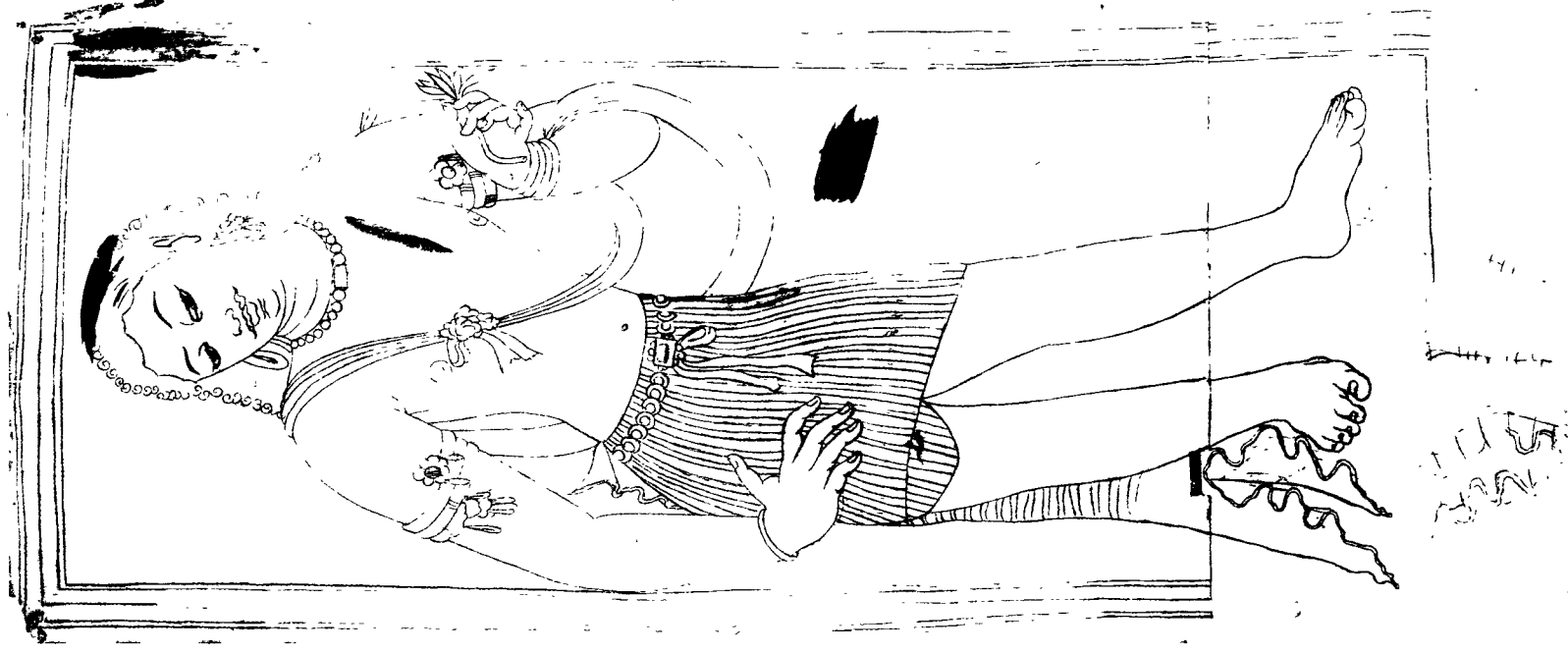
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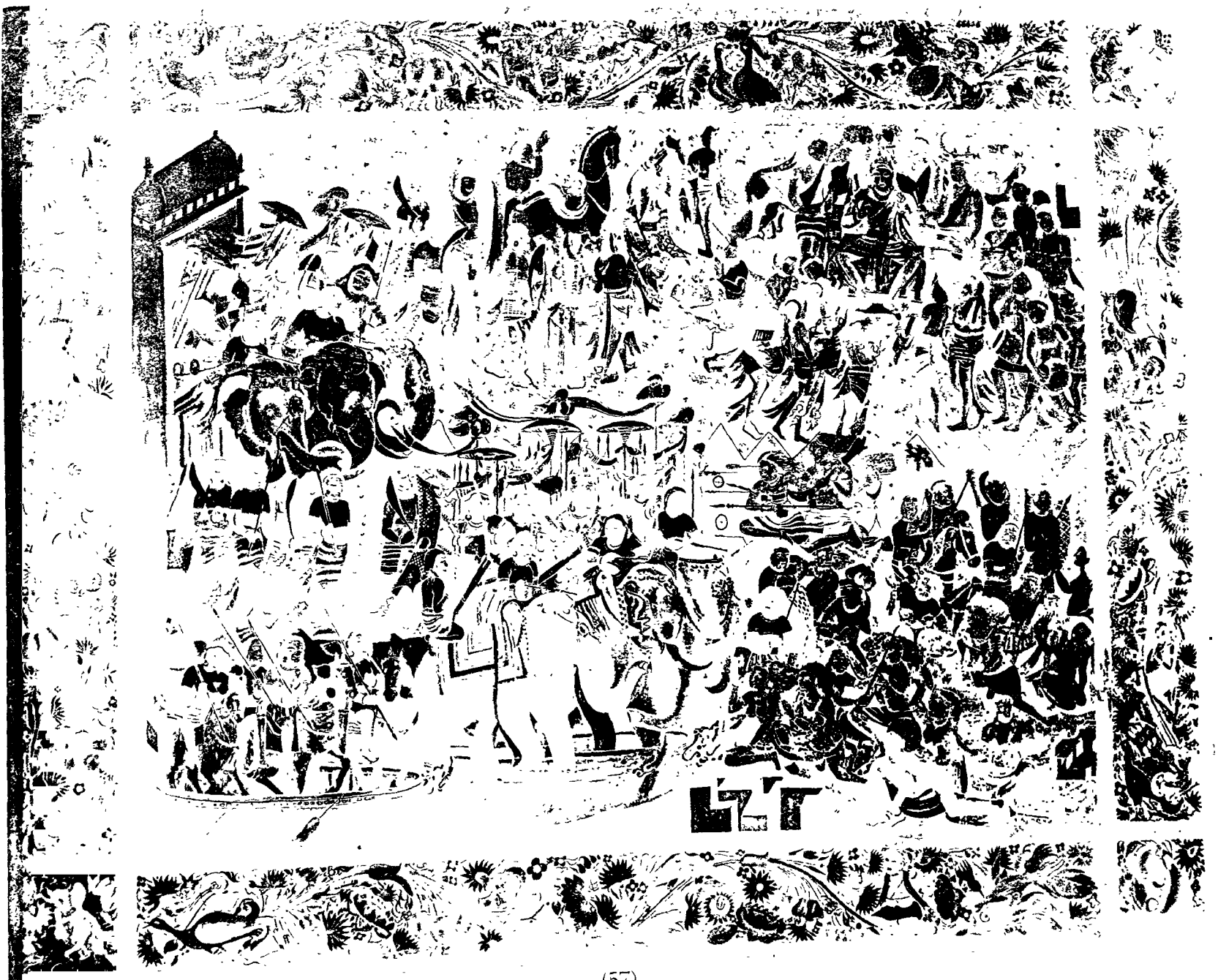
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